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THE

GUNMAKER OF THE BORDER;

OR,

THE HUNTED MAIDEN

BY JAMES L. BOWEN.

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THE GUNMAKER OF THE BORDER;

OR,

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CHAPTER I.

THE GUNMAKER.

AT first sight you would most likely have pronounced him an old man, but then a second look would have changed this impression, and a third left you still more than ever in doubt as to the real number of years he might have seen. It was the sunken eye, the strongly marked visage, the thick sandy whiskers and hair, streaked here and there with gray, which first conveyed the impression of age, and it was the freshness of the complexion, the quick, nervous movements of the evidently muscular figure, which seemed to indicate youth. But when both were considered together, the mind vacillated from point to point in uncertainty.

He was somewhat above the medium height, full-chested and strong-limbed, almost gaunt in frame, but with great knots and lumps of muscle all over his person that showed how valuable he might be as a friend—how dangerous as an enemy.

His dress was that of border men in general, save that he wore a short green roundabout in place of the usual hunting-frock, and a close-fitting cap ingeniously made of dressed buffalo and deer-hide. The peculiarity of his dress had won from the Indians the name of Green Jacket, which had come to be adopted by most of the whites; so that he was generally known as Green Jacket, the Gunmaker. Most people knew that he had at some time been honored with a more civilized

name, but so generally had his Indian cognomen been used that the other was almost, if not quite, forgotten.

In feature he was not handsome. His eyes were quite too keen and piercing, looking out from beneath heavy overhanging brows, which gave him at all times a half-savage appearance. His nose was too large, and his cheek-bones quite too prominent.

He was standing now beside a narrow bench, fixed upon one side of the cabin, engaged in repairing the broken stock of a rifle. Beside him sat a heavy, iron-bound box of tools, and a few more were lying about upon the bench. Two or three guns stood in as many corners of the room, and one, evidently the favorite weapon of the occupant, a long, heavy rifle, hung in a pair of brackets above the bench. Very little in the way of furniture was apparent—on a few blocks, some simple cooking utensils, and a quantity of dry fuel.

A curtain of dressed skins ran across one end of the cabin, but if curiosity prompted a peep behind, nothing was to be seen save the rude couch where the gunmaker passed his sleeping hours.

Outside, the prospect was scarcely less bare. The cabin was isolated from all others, and shut in by the hills and woodland so that no other human habitation was in sight. Immediately about the cabin the primitive forest had been cut away, and some portion of the land had evidently been cultivated in years past. But now the bushes and weeds held almost undisputed possession, and the forest seemed likely to regain its lost territory. A "trail" passed by the humble dwelling, though where it came from, or which way it led, seemed a matter of mystery.

Green Jacket himself was a mystery.

Quite a number of years before, when the settlements in that vicinity were in their infancy, a settler had built the cabin to which we have made reference, and cleared up the land about it. He remained the first season, and then went to bring his family. But, neither himself nor family ever came there afterward.

It was given out at length that the cabin was again occupied, and on visiting the spot such was found to be the case. Green Jacket was there with a small kit of gunsmith's tools,

and seemed calm in the possession. His right was questioned, and no satisfactory answer given; but no decided measures were resorted to, for two reasons: he was very calm and undemonstrative in manner, and promised to vacate at once in case the owner returned. He proved a skillful mechanic, and as no other repairer of fire-arms was in the vicinity, he became rather a necessity in that region, where life or death might at any moment depend upon having the customary weapons in perfect order.

The owner of the cabin had not returned, and Green Jacket had not been required to vacate. But he was still almost as much of a mystery as six years before. Quite frequently he closed the cabin, and was absent for weeks at a time, going no one knew where, and returning when least expected.

On one occasion a neighbor, having a curiosity to learn something more in regard to Green Jacket than he had been able to do thus far, broke into the cabin during his absence. But before his investigations were completed the gunsmith returned. The intruder escaped with his life, but never afterward allowed his curiosity to rise above the control of prudence.

On another occasion an attempt had been made to follow him when he left the place, but the party was soon discovered, and informed that he was meddling with matters which did not concern his welfare, and that it would be much more prudent never to attempt the like again. The gunsmith emphasized the words by shooting a bird from the limb of a distant tree, and after witnessing the act, and looking once in the depths of those fierce gray eyes, the scout lost all ambition to learn more of the secret haunts toward which Green Jacket was repairing.

While the gunmaker was wiping his brow in perplexity, and whistling because he had not such a tool as he desired—as though whistling would supply the deficiency—there sounded movements without, and presently a light knock was heard upon the door.

"Come in," was the bidding, in a somewhat husky voice.

The door opened, creaking on its hinges, and a young man introduced himself cautiously into the room. He hesitated a moment, as though to assure himself that there was no real danger, and then advanced to the side of the occupant.

The smith ran his sharp eyes quickly over the new-comer, and then, as though quite satisfied by the inspection, extended his hand to receive a rifle which the other proffered.

"That lock is out of order, sir; can you repair it?" the visitor asked, in tones which were just a little affected.

"If it's a *lock* I ken," was the unhesitating reply. "But I can't make a new one, because I haven't got the means here."

"The fault is very trifling, sir, very trifling. It can be but a few moments' work to repair it."

"Yer right; and if ye'll hold yer breath about two minutes the work 'll be done."

He proceeded to remove the lock, keeping up the conversation as he worked.

"Yer a stranger here, I see."

"I am, sir."

"I knowed that, for people out here don't wear that kind of clothes very long. You'll soon want so'thin' more for service—like mine, here. But then, perhaps, ye don't intend to stay?"

"I scarcely know, sir. I always admired the spirit of the Far West, and have come out here to take a hunt, and try it. If I realize the anticipations of my boyhood I shall remain and become a permanent fixture somewhere here. Otherwise I shall return East."

"I ken tell ye what ye'll do—ye will go back to the East."

"Do you really think so?"

"Do ye think the sun 'll rise to-morrer mornin'? I ain't speakin' disrespectful of the land whar ye come from, nor the way ye do things thar; but you ain't one of the kind of fellers what 'll take naterally to this here sile. It may do for a month or tew, but arter that ye'll want suthin' more like the old sort. You didn't come to any place to hunt, though; there ain't any game here!"

"No game here?"

The young man seemed quite confounded at the assertion.

"No, sir, not to call any thing. Say a hundred and fifty miles north of here ye'd hev found a *game* deestricht."

"What game would I find there?"

"Red-skins, hoss-thieves, painters, b'ars, and any quantity of smaller fry.

The young man shook his head in rather a dubious manner.

"I don't think I have any particular ambition to hunt in that direction," he said. "Much as I would like to see the class of characters of which you speak, I understand pretty well that it would be at a great risk to myself."

"If you don't understand it now, ye'd be purty likely to afore ye'd been thar long. But I reckon ye won't take it anyways onkind if I ask ye what handle ye're carried by."

"I probably do not understand your meaning, sir."

"I mean yer name."

"My parents gave me their choice in the name of Theodore, and I inherited the family name of Thurber, so I judge you may put the two together, and make out what you wish to know."

"Well, Mr. Theodore Thurber, your lock is ready, and I suppose you are anxious to become acquainted with the game in this section, so I won't keep ye any longer, arter ye pay me for what I've done for ye."

The price was named, and the visitor was about taking up his weapon, after making the payment, when a commotion outside attracted attention. They heard the sound of hasty footfalls, with the indistinct exclamations and curses of an excited and angry man.

"What in the old boy?" demanded Green Jacket, hastening toward the door, followed by Theodore.

Before they reached it, however, it was thrown open, and a young woman entered. She was pale and terribly excited, but it did not need a second glance to discover that she was very beautiful. Her hair, which floated wildly about her neck and shoulders, was long, waving and silken in texture, while her dress and general appearance betokened at least respectable standing in good society. Altogether, the falling of a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky would have been much less startling than her appearance at that time and place, and in such a manner.

Only a few feet behind her came a second personage, a man evidently some five and thirty years of age, or thereabouts,

much less respectable in appearance than the fugitive woman, and apparently beside himself with passion.

As he entered, his eyes fell upon the object of his pursuit, and he sprung toward her, only to encounter the strong arm of the gunsmith.

"What in the old boy does all this mean?" the latter asked, holding him back.

"Oh, sirs, don't let him take me away from here?" exclaimed the woman, with clasped hands. "Save me, and I will be your friend for life!"

"You can't keep her from me—you hain't any right to dew it acause she's my wife!"

"No, indeed, I am not; and never will be your wife!" she exclaimed, vehemently.

The pursuer here attempted to press by Green Jacket, and seize the woman, but he was thrown back with one movement of the strong arm which opposed him, while the gunsmith remarked:

"Whether the woman's yer wife or not, ye are under my ruff now, and can't take her away unless she's a mind to go—not until ye make a clean story of the whole matter. I don't like to see a woman abused, and I ain't a goin' to, either."

"That's your style, is it?" hissed the infuriated man, producing a knife and moving toward the gunsmith. "Just get out of my way, will you, or I may be obliged to carve your insolence."

But he stopped quite suddenly when the other thrust one hand inside his jacket, and withdrew it again, holding a pistol at full cock.

"Perhaps you calculate to settle matters right here," he remarked, with those keen eyes penetrating the man with the knife.

The latter returned his weapon to the sheath, remarking:

"I don't expect to fight a man in his own house, of course; but I may meet you some day."

"Nothing more likely."

"Come, Louisa, come; I'm going now. Don't be so foolish."

But she only shrunk back, with an appealing look to Green Jacket.

"I tell yer the girl ain't goin' with ye unless she wants ter."

Sartin not till ye tell why and wherefore, and what ye want to dew with her. It's plain that she hain't been well used, in some way, and unless ye can clear up matters more'n ye hev done so far, she'll stay here for the present."

"I tell you she's my wife," persisted the intruder.

"No, I am not: indeed I am not!" the girl exclaimed.

The gunsmith looked from one to the other, half-puzzled.

"In that case I shall believe the gal," he said.

"Well, I don't see the great difference," pursued the claimant. "If she hasn't been married in form, and all that, she's mine by promise, and that is all the same, the way I reckon. She knows the promise, and knows what her father would do about it, if he were here."

The woman looked from one to the other of the parties with an air of deep suffering. But she did not speak.

"Come, ain't yer comin' along peaceable?" the man persisted, taking another step toward the door.

"Oh, sir, tell me," she implored, stepping close to Green Jacket, "had even my father the right to send me away from all that makes life endurable, with such a man as Dan Daffey? I can not, *can not*, CAN NOT give up life thus!"

On hearing the name of Dan Daffey, the gunsmith started perceptibly, and bent another of his sharp glances upon the person before him.

"Is that Dan Daffey?" he asked.

"It is, sir, him and no other."

"Are you Dan Daffey?" He asked of the person in question, stepping a pace or two nearer him.

"That is what I am called. Very likely you have heard of me."

"I have, Mr. Dan Daffey, I have heard of you. And now let me tell you one thing. If after I have counted twenty I don't see you in this room again, I'll send a party to your house without any word or warning. Do you hear all that?"

"I heard your words, certainly."

"Well, sir," and he raised the pistol by way of emphasis, "I'm goin' to 'git now, and I count party fast—you can make yer calkilations accordin'ly."

He turned partially away, though still keeping an eye fixed upon the movements of his antagonist, and his bearded lips

were seen to move rapidly. Duffey remained irresolute a moment, and then turned upon his heel.

"You'll hear from me again," he said, as he stepped outside the door.

"What in the old boy does he want to keep up his threatenin' for?" the gunmaker demanded. "He ought to know that *talk* don't skeer me. But now that he's gone, what can we do for you, my lady?"

"Let me rest and quiet myself a moment," she said, sinking upon a block. "I can talk with you then."

Green Jacket drew aside the curtain of skins, and pointed to the rude couch, saying:

"Please lie down here for a while. It isn't a nice place, but such as it is, it's at your service, and nobody will disturb you there. When you feel rested and make up your mind what you want ter dew, or what 'll be for the best, we can talk things over at our leisure."

She hesitated only a moment, and then, with many thanks, availed herself of the kind offer. Having disposed of his fair guest, Green Jacket joined Thurber, who, standing beside the open door, had been watching the movements of Dan Duffey.

CHAPTER II.

DAN DUFFEY.

THE wagon-trail, of which previous mention has been made, ran a few rods from the door of the cabin. When Thorpe and Thurber first followed Duffey as far as the door of Green Jacket's cabin, two horses were quietly feeding along the borders of the trail. One of them being provided with a side-saddle, while the other had only a blanket, indicated that they were the animals which had been ridden by the woman Louisa, and Dan. Toward them the last named was making his way, boiling with indignation and lashed vengeance. He caught the bridle of one, mounted the other, and rode back toward the settlement proper, some quarter of a mile distant.

Green Jacket reached the spot in time to behold him disappear.

"There goes as big a scoundrel as there is unhung," he remarked. "If the woman hadn't been there I'd have shot him when he brought out that knife, spite of the old boy."

"Who and what is he?" Thurber asked.

"I guess you have me there," the gunsmith replied. "I never have happened to meet the rascal before, but he bears a name of all that's evil. He is a runny-gale, I reckon: leastways he spends most of his time among the reds, and they do say he knows more about horse-stealin', and all them kind of iniquities than any man orter to know and live. He has been known to murder men, but nobody ever took it up, 'cause they all seem to be afraid of him."

"He seems, then, to be a notorious desperado—a perfect fire-eater."

"He's worse nor that. There hain't been any words made yet mean enough for him."

"But what do you think of this affair? This must be one of his evil tricks."

"It jist is; but I can't quite see through it, myself. From what they said, it seems the girl's father is mixed up in it, some way. I s'pose she'll clear it all up when we come to talk the matter over with her."

"Rather an interesting young lady—decidedly pretty, and apparently very sensible. I have a curiosity to know more about her."

"Yer right, my lad. She's smart as a trap, and handsome as a new bullet, to look tew."

"Anyhow, what will come of this? Will Duffey come back again?"

"Wal, now ye've got me there, for I don't know much about his way of doin' business, nor what lays at the bottom of the whole thing. But, unless I'm considerably deceived about the feller, we shall hear more from him."

"I am a stranger to you," the younger man continued, "but I have been looking for a first-class adventure some time, and as this promises to be one, I would like to obtain the privilege of staying with you until it takes some form. Would my presence be objectionable to you?"

The gunmaker eyed the applicant for a moment, and then slowly replied :

"No, ye kin stay. Of course ye know it wouldn't be a pleasant place for ye if ye was one of that feller's gang. But I don't really think ye are."

"I assure you, on my honor, that I never heard of Dan Duffy until this hour, or know the existence of such a man. But, if you suspect me of complicity with him I would not of course wish to remain."

His tone indicated so certainly that he felt hurt by the remark, that Green Jacket hastened to say :

"No, no, boy; stay by all means. If ye were an old hand at the business ye might be of some sarvice; anyway ye'll not be likely to do any damage."

"Do you suspect fighting may result?"

"Can't say any thing about *that*. One thing is certain, the gal ain't a-kevin' fair play, and I'm goin' to stand by her, if things are any ways as she thinks they be."

"You are right, and I will help you to the best of my ability."

Green Jacket looked inside, and saw that the girl whom he had succored was not yet astir. Then he sat down beside the open door, and bowed his head, evidently in deep reflection. He sat thus for some minutes, while Thurber, not wishing to disturb him, wandered about the place, wondering how this mysterious matter would result.

He was not particularly surprised on turning the corner of the cabin to behold two men approaching, and at the same time he found that the gunsmith had risen and was regarding them also.

"What is the meaning of that?" Theodore asked.

"Coming to talk the matter over, and try to persuade me to give up the girl," returned Green Jacket. "Ye see they're all as afraid of this Duffy as though he was the very old boy himself, and he has sent them over—now see if I ain't in the right."

By this time the two men, both middle-aged citizens of the settlement, had come within speaking distance, and saluted the gunmaker very respectfully. When within a few feet of him they stopped, and seemed somewhat embarrassed as to the

manner in which their errand should be made known. At last one of them led the way.

"Duffey is over in the village," he said, "and is making all manner of threats against you."

"Against me?"

"Yes. He says his wife is here in your cabin, and you refuse to let him take her away."

"Well?"

"It looks as though you'd better let her go back, and save a great deal of excitement, and possibly bloodshed."

"She can go back any time when she wants to," was the very calm reply. "If she prefers to stay here he can't take her away!"

"Yes, yes; but her father parted with them at the village, and had just started back. Dan has sent for him, and in a few hours at most he'll be here, so you see—"

"Sartin, I see all about it. And if you will go back and tell Dan Duffey that you couldn't make out any thing whatever, you'll do me a favor."

"As you say," pursued the speaker, turning his back, and moving away. "But you know something of what Dan is—I wouldn't like to stand in your shoes."

"Nor I wouldn't like tew have ye, if that confounded ranygale can seare you out that way. The shoes wouldn't know what to make of it."

The gunmaker laughed, a harsh, peculiar laugh, but the visitors evidently felt in no mood for hilarity. They plodded slowly back toward the wood from which they had so recently emerged, talking together very gravely as they went.

Turning to enter the cabin, the smith and his guest were almost startled to behold, standing close to the door, the fair object of all the discussion. She was very pale, now that the fierce excitement of her flight had passed away, and her voice was not quite steady, as she asked:

"My father! Did they say my father was coming here?"

"Yes, ma'm, that was what one of them said."

"Then I can not stay here! I must go away—where can I go?"

There was evident and increased alarm in her tones, so that the gunmaker seemed considerably uneasy as he said:

"You can not go anywhere, alone. We all seem to be mixed up in this affair, but none of us knows any thing about it. Now, what in the old boy does it all mean? If ye don't want to go with these men, why they shan't oblige ye to; but all this time we don't know any thing about the facts of the case, ye see—"

"Please do not ask me to explain all to you, for I feel that I can not. Let me go from here, and no matter where, so that I only escape them. I had rather die than be made the victim of Dan Duffey, even though he called me 'wife.' And I must not fall into his power again."

"But, how the old boy is it yer father wants ye to marry such a creater as this? I guess he's no better than crazy."

The distress and alarm of the poor girl was quite affecting, even to the rough nature of the gunmaker, while Theodore stood by, anxious to say something in the way of consolation and assurance, but quite unable to think of any words that were appropriate.

"You have been very kind to me," the young woman remarked, "but I can only thank you. I have no means of repaying you. Let me go now, and I will endeavor to seek my own safety, and not endanger your lives further."

"But, lady, you must not go alone," exclaimed Thunder. "You would be hunted down and brought back, even if you did not lose yourself, and wander back to the very place you were seeking to avoid. Let me, as I have nothing else to engage my attention, go with you and render what assistance I may be able."

The gunmaker bent another searching gaze upon the young man, as he uttered the words, and then exclaimed:

"In my young days, before the old boy got quite so complete mastery over me, I used to go to meetin', sometimes, and thar I heard tell of blind men leadin' other folks that was blind—somethin' of the kind. I don't just remember how it come in. If you're a stranger here, I guess yer pull' off with the lady'd be about like it—only ye'd both go but in about half the time."

"I surely only showed my willingness to help the lady!" exclaimed Thunder, quite offended. "Perhaps you can show a more advisable way."

"Oh, ye needn't go to take on," was the soothing reply. "I admire yer spirit, only I'm afraid it won't amount to much. Now, if ye are in 'arnest about doin' the lady a favor, won't ye stand out by the door, and keep a watch on all sides, while I talk over matters with the lady, and think what's best to be done."

Theodore complied, not very graciously, for truth to tell he had an intense desire to be near the fair fugitive; but he had a deep and earnest interest in her welfare, with a considerable confidence in the ability of Green Jacket, so that he was willing to occupy any subordinate position while that individual planned for the safety of Louisa.

The gunmaker pointed out a position a little distance from the cabin where he could keep a close watch of all the different approaches, and toward it he hastened.

Left alone with his strange *protégé*, Green Jacket fidgeted a few moments, and then said:

"How the old boy it is I don't know, but the more I study over this case of yours, the more I don't know what it means. Now, if you could only give me a trifle of an insight, maybe I could study the rest out to my satisfaction."

The lady bit her lips, then turned to her interlocutor, and in beseeching tones said:

"Do not press me to tell you this, which I should not speak. You have heard that I am promised to Dan Dufley as his wife, that I had rather die than fulfill the contract. Is not that all you need to know? Will you not excuse me from telling you any thing more?"

"I shan't ask you any more in that direction, but, just let me know one thing: if suthin' should happen to Dan, wouldn't you be all right then? Ye'd be willin' to go with yer father if Dan never would or could be any farther trouble to ye?"

"Oh, no, sir, no; you would not think so if you could know all—but I can not tell you—I can not stay—let me fly as soon as possible, so that they may not come upon me here, and add to your trouble."

"Wait a moment, my little girl. Don't you suppose the idea has occurred to others that you might fly? What the old boy would they expect you were going to do? On every side there's woods, and some sneak is keepin' watch for ye, not a

lit o' doubt. Dan Duffey is not the feller to let ye slip off that way. So we must look for suthin else."

The poor girl dropped her face in her hands, and groaned audibly.

"Oh, dear, dear!" she exclaimed, "is there no help—no hope? Must I be made the victim of that villain whom I loathe and despise?"

"Oh, hush, hush; don't take on so!" remarked Green Jacket. "If we can't fly there are other ways of getting at a good result. Now listen to me."

He arose, shut the door carefully, and then came back, and took one of her hands within his own.

CHAPTER III.

A TRAP SPRUNG.

THEODORE THURBER was getting decidedly uneasy. Not alone that he was posted in a very conspicuous place, where any person so disposed could take a deliberate aim at him from the adjacent forests—and he knew enough of border life to know that he was not particularly safe under all the circumstances—but he was anxious to see the mysterious being who had been so strangely connected with the events of the day. Of course he had a great curiosity to know who and what she was.

"She didn't wish to tell before the old gunmaker," he reasoned; "but if I could only see her alone, I knew very well she would not object to confiding in me."

The sun was fast getting lower, and Thurber was getting more and more uneasy. Why did not Green Jacket come to him in some manner or another? He was not a coward, in the abstract, but what if that murderous outlaw, whom everybody seemed to fear, should take a fancy to shoot at him, just by way of diversion? The thought was far from comfortable.

Presently the door opened, and the old gunmaker came

forth. He looked around carefully, and then strode over toward the place where the young man stood.

"I reckon we shall hear from 'em soon," he said, carelessly. Thurber looked about uneasily.

"What do you anticipate when they get here?"

"Why, they'll be here, that's all!"

"Yes, I know; but what will be done?"

"Some pretty tall swearin', I feel confident."

An exclamation of impatience arose to Theodore's lips, but he repressed it. The thought occurred to him that if the old gunmaker was thus perplexing to his friend what must he be to an enemy?

Before he could make any further remarks the other exclaimed:

"Well, thar the sarpents come. Now you'll have a chance to see some first-class fun!"

And sure enough, from the opening in the forest, came a dozen men, pressing hastily up toward the cabin, regardless of path or trail. The numbers were significant, taking into consideration the fact that there were scarcely more than a dozen white men living within as many miles.

Theodore felt a thrill of anxiety, notwithstanding his attempt at perfect calmness. Bending toward Green Jacket, he asked, scarcely above a whisper:

"Where is she?"

"See here," the person addressed responded, "if any of these men ask you any such question, you know just as little about it as any of them. Do you understand?"

"I think I do."

"Then we'll get down toward the door."

They moved down as though to enter the house, but were met at the door by the party, who were led by Dan Daffy. This individual at once stepped in front of the gunmaker, and hissed forth:

"Now, sir, I'll trouble ye to bring out my wife!"

"Ye haven't any wife, Dan Daffy, and ye never ought to hev!"

"I tell you I have, and she's in here. She hain't gone away, 'cause there ain't any way she could go. Now be so kind as to bring her out."

"Yes, bring her out," rather faintly chorused half a dozen of the other voices.

While this exchange of words had been going on, a tall, elderly-looking man stepped forth from the crowd, and addressed Green Jacket, speaking very distinctly:

"Mr. Duffey informed me that my daughter is in your cabin," he said. "If such be the case I command you to bring her out."

"Of course if *your* dotter is missing you can easily describe her," the gunmaker continued, with most provoking coolness.

"Perhaps I could, but I certainly shall not," was the dignified answer.

"Don't mind any thing more of him," broke in Dan. "I'll go in and bring her out!"

He started forward, but his advance was checked by Green Jacket, who presented a pistol full in his face.

"Ye hadn't better set a foot in ide my door!" he exclaimed, in menacing tones. "Ye know what I told ye when ye were out of thar this day, and *I meant it*. If anybody else wants to look for a mis'in' gal in thar I hein't any objection. But just so sure as you set a foot in thar I'll shoot ye, if I never draw another breath. Ye'd orter been killed for yer ne'er-do-wells long ago, and it won't take much provocation on your part to bring it to pass now. Go ahead, you that want to search another man's premises, but be sure I shall expect ye to answer for it afore the matter is over with."

Duffey had fallen back, thoroughly cowed by the cold gaze of the weapon looking into his face, for which he was quite unprepared, and all the others, knowing something of Green Jacket's mysterious habits, hesitated to pass in.

"Go in, some of you," said the professed father, "go in, and tell the girl that I am here. She will not remain there long afterward."

Still they hesitated.

"Perhaps you had better go your self," remarked the gunmaker. "No doubt you can settle for it as well as any of the party."

The person addressed did not pause to reflect—had he done so very likely he would have changed his mind. But, glancing around, to make sure that a sufficient number of friends

were at hand, he stepped over the threshold, and was quickly followed by four or five others.

Green Jacket, holding his pistol and leaning against the cabin wall, quietly waited for their reappearance. There was the sound of considerable bustle inside, a brief consultation seemed to be held, and then the party appeared in the doorway.

"Some mistake, Daffey," the leader said. "The girl is not here."

"I tell you she must be," was the reply, with an oath. "I left her here, and I know she couldn't get away. Have you looked down the cellar?"

"We found no cellar."

"There is a cellar," Green Jacket broke in, "and a well, both under the house. There's some fat-pine torches just behind the bench, if ye want to use 'em. Better take a party full survey, for it won't cost any more."

Of course the excitement was now intense. The party had expected to encounter the maiden at once on gaining entrance to the cabin, but in this they were more than disappointed. Not a trace of her having been present could be discovered, and the extreme willingness of Green Jacket that they should explore farther, seemed to promise but poorly for any success. And then those who knew most of the strange man, began to fear that a day of reckoning might not be far distant. So that but three or four joined in the further search, though all felt an equal interest.

The cellar, which was simply a narrow excavation in the ground, was very quickly scrutinized, but a cat could have found no hiding-place there, much less a human being. Those who went down returned very soon, not particularly elated by their continued want of success.

The gunmaker had now stepped inside, and directed the further movements of the party.

"Don't pass by the well without looking in," he remarked.

But as no one responded, he stepped forward himself, and lifted the plank which covered the opening. A torch was then lowered, but the black water several feet below alone gave back its reflection. With a matter of dissatisfaction, the investigators lowered the plank, and retreated from the cabin.

Here another consultation ensued, conducted in low tones and at a little distance, so that Green Jacket and his companion, standing in the door of the hut, could not gather its import. But, presently, one or two of the party moved forward again, and in a very respectful tone inquired:

"We are not quite satisfied about the cellar. Will you go down with us, and let us take another look?"

"Here is the light—you can go down alone, I imagine. What in the old boy do ye suppose I need go for?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. Only one of these men saw something down there he wants you to explain. But it may be a mistake. Suppose we go and see?"

Two of the men descended to the cellar, but presently were heard calling:

"Come down here, Green Jacket, and tell us what this means."

Merely bidding Theodore keep an eye out, the gunmaker hastened down, and found the two men bending over some object, almost beneath the rude stairs. He moved to the spot, and was about bending over in like manner, when a garment was quickly thrown over his head, and he received a blow which momentarily stunned him.

Upon recovering sufficiently, he tore away the garment, which was a woodman's frock, and found himself in utter darkness. The traitors had left the cellar, and closed the door above. Following as best as he could in the darkness, he ascended the rude steps, cut in a massive log, and found that the trap, made of a heavy plank, had been closed and weighted down.

Finding that his utmost strength was insufficient to raise it, he stood for some moments, listening.

The party was still evidently in the neighborhood, but had left the cabin above. For a moment anger and the pain of his aching head, seemed to deprive the gunmaker of consciousness, then he descended to the cellar, and set about taking the shortest course toward liberty. This was none other than to dig with his hands a passage-way through the soft dirt, cut beneath the walls of the cabin.

This, though a perfectly feasible undertaking, was one involving considerable labor, and most earnest application. The

only assistance Green Jacket could obtain was from a heavy clasp-knife in his pocket, with which he dug into the firm earth. Yet it was some distance to freedom, and though he never relaxed his efforts for a moment, peacy darkness had settled over the earth before he was able to get a breath of fresh outer air through the opening.

But all was still outside, and feeling that his unwelcome visitors had left the premises, the gunmaker worked furiously upon the enlargement of his opening, until he was able to draw himself through it, out into the cool air beside the cabin walls.

Here he waited a moment to regain breath and brush some of the dirt from his clothing, and when this had been done, he glided around the rude structure like some flitting spirit.

As he had anticipated, he found that the intruders had all gone, and his new-made friend seemed to have gone with them, for the cabin-door was shut and every thing was as **profoundly silent as the grave.**

On reaching the door, and making an attempt to enter, he found that it had been fastened upon the inside. He was startled at this discovery, for he feared that the mob might still be present. But, the hollowness of the sound given back dispelled the idea, and he soon found means of forcing an entrance.

It was, as we have said, already perfectly dark, and the gunmaker did not care to produce a light. He had really no need of one, and then, if any of his late visitors still lingered in the vicinity, it would serve them much more than himself.

He called once or twice upon the name of his late customer, young Tharber, but as no voice answered, he proceeded to inspect the interior of the cabin, fearing lest at any stage he might come upon the young man's dead body.

But no such discovery was made, and Green Jacket came to the very natural conclusion that Theodore had either been taken away by the crowd, or had left the place in a hurry.

"Course ye can't depend nothin' on such a boy," he muttered, " 'cause he don't know any thing what life means in this lawless place. I don't *blame* him eny—time was when I'd 'a' done jest the same way myself."

He paused and listened—crept to the door and listened again, and then made his way back to the section of plank which covered the well. This was a single, heavy piece, hewn from the tree, and fitted with a cord of care and skill.

By the exercise of considerable exertion, the gunmaker raised it without making any noise, and laid it very carefully aside. Then lowering his head within the inclosure, he gave utterance to a very low signal.

To his evident surprise, some moments passed, and there was no response. Then the signal was repeated, this time a trifle louder.

When three or four vain efforts of this kind had been made, the gunmaker began to lose patience, and rose to his feet in a very perplexed manner.

"What in the name of the old boy can this mean?" he asked himself, almost aloud. "Don't seem as though she could have got to sleep there, and all this excitement going on. Don't seem either as though they could have found her. I'll try once more, and see what the result will be."

He did try again, and the signals were kept up till all hopes of getting any response ended, and then he prepared for a personal investigation. To accomplish this he first descended into the well. This was an easy task to him, as the well was quite narrow, and the sides had been built up with stones and blocks of wood, so arranged as to present a ready footing.

It was some twelve feet down to the water, but before reaching it Green Jacket disappeared suddenly from sight. In fact he entered a lateral chamber, opening from the well, and passing out from beneath the hut. The entrance to this passage had been so arranged that it was not to be seen from above, though it could be entered without difficulty by any person descending the well.

Along this the gunmaker groped his way, and it was apparent that at every step he expected to find some traces of the woman he sought. But he reached the terminus and had made no discovery.

The other extremity of this singular gallery was an old well, outside the cabin, which had become dry and fallen into disuse since Green Jacket drew one into the dwelling to furnish water in case of attack from foes of any kind. And the

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by some means, this method of communication with the outer world through the depths of the earth had been constructed.

When Green Jacket placed his new-made friend on the watch outside, he at once introduced the fugitive to this retreat, making sure that she was comfortably located, and here he expected to find her now that the immediate peril was past, and darkness had come to aid their further movements.

But to his unbounded surprise she had not answered his signals, nor was she to be found! Surely this was mystery beyond measure.

The old well had been partially filled with dirt and stones from the connecting passage, so that she could not be there, and the well was shallow. She was not *there*, as a brief search satisfied him.

Losing no further time he quickly remounted to the cabin, replaced the cover of his now useless retreat, and then threw himself upon the narrow work-bench.

"What in the old boy is the world a-coming to, I wonder," he muttered. "Here I've been fooled and beaten in my own game by that prince of darkness, that unnamed mockery of mankind, Dan Daffy! Not in *his* game, but in *my* own! That's the rub. I don't mind being beaten, for I am used to it. But not when I play the cards just as I want them. Dan has got the woman—he's got the other feller, with the thunderin' name; yes, and he's got me, too! But never mind—I'm a-coming after ye, Dan Daffy, right away, and when I do overtake ye there'll be a reckonin'; now count on that!"

He was gratified to find that none of his private property had been molested, and in less than five minutes, heavily armed, and prepared for a serious struggle with any form of danger, he was ready, standing in his cabin-door, to set forth upon his self-imposed mission.

CHAPTER IV.

BACKWARD.

We return now to Theodore Thurber. He had entered the cabin, scarcely realizing whether the movement was from intention or otherwise. He had come to look for an adventure—there was every probability of having his utmost desires in that direction satisfied.

When Green Jacket went into the cellar, Theodore thought of accompanying him. But, before he could make up his mind to do so, or find an opportunity, it was too late.

He saw the men who had led the way for the prisoner spring quickly up the entrance, and at the same moment the trap was dropped and fastened. Of course he did not need to be told that this meant mischief; but just how or what he could not determine.

Indeed, before he had time for any extended reflection he found himself caught by the throat with a grip that he could not shake off, while the dull point of a rusty knife was held unpleasantly near his heart.

He barely gathered that Dan Daffey had sprung into the cabin and seized him thus, when a voice, harsh with brutal passion, hissed in his ear:

"Tell where the girl is, or I'll cut yer heart out for my breakfast!"

"I know nothing of her," he said, struggling to free himself from the unyielding grasp. "The stowch is the only man who knows any thing about her."

He was sorry a moment afterward that he had even thus partially betrayed the secrets of the men for whom, long he already had such deep fears; but it was too late now to undo what had been done, and in fact it seemed to make very little difference, so far as Dan was concerned.

"You lie!" he continued, "I know it is all a lie. Tell me where she is, or you never will see daylight ag'in!"

In vain Thurber struggled and protested. He was physically not a match for the ruffian with whom he had to deal, and the crushing grasp upon his throat was fast doing its work, in reducing him to a state of helplessness.

Feeling that he might be choked to death, and acting with impulse rather than reason, he threw himself heavily to the floor, and succeeded in breaking the hold upon his neck. But ere he could rise, the keen knife was placed close to his throat, a heavy foot upon his chest, and again that fiendish voice hissed:

"Now, tell me whar she is, or out comes the red!"

Poor Theodore had now little hope of saving his life, and was trying to think of some expedient to gain a little time, when the person who professed to be the father of the woman who had caused all this commotion came up, and placed a hand upon Duffey's arm.

Some few words passed between them, the purport of which Theodore did not fully gather, when the brute lifted his knife, gave the young man a severe kick, and turned away.

But he came back in a moment, and ordered two or three of those near the spot to bind Thurber.

"Tie him up well, so he won't get away," were his parting instructions. "I'll show him pretty soon that he'd better not try to thwart me in that way. I ain't in the habit of bein' trifled with—I ain't!"

The order was quickly obeyed, for the crowd of satellites evidently neither dared or wished to disobey the wild man who had spoken to them. Cords were produced in abundance, the young man's arms and feet securely tied, and then he was disposed of in one corner of the cabin.

Some minutes passed, and the commotion outside still continued, though all demonstrations were so subdued that it was impossible for Theodore, attentively as he might listen, to catch their meaning. So he remained in suspense, until presently he heard the throng moving past the cabin again, and gathered from the demonstrations that they were about to return to the settlement.

Then his persecutor entered once more, and stalked up to where he was lying.

"Come, my fine chap, get up!" he commanded. "I ain't

through with you yet. I want you to take a little pleasure trip along with me."

A half-dozen wild resolutions rushed through the young man's mind, but he could put none of them into practice, for he was raised to his feet, the thongs upon his ankles loosed, and then, with Dan upon one side and an assistant upon the other, he was led forth.

Once outside the cabin his conductors strode forward with hasty steps, and half-walking, partially running and partially dragged along, Tharber was obliged to keep pace with them.

It was fast getting dusk now, but he saw very readily that they had ignored any marked path, and were taking their way into the blank forest some distance to the left of the settlement.

It seemed as though man had never been there, for the way was choked with bushes and thorns, fallen trees and rocks, so as to be nearly impassable.

In fact, so difficult was their progress that Dan soon stopped short with a savage oath, demanding why the guide had brought them into such a labyrinth.

But while the other was endeavoring to frame something of an apology, the leader continued:

"I rayther guess ye couldn't hev found a better place, after all. Here, bring him up to this tree, and let's see how he'll fit."

It was a stout sapling to which Theodore was led, and when he had been placed against it the two men proceeded to bind him there, securing his feet again. In vain were all his struggles. The more he endeavored to break away, the tighter were the cords drawn, until his situation became painful in the extreme.

"I hope you'll rest well to-night," was the mocking sneer with which Duffey stepped back and regarded his brutal work.

It was quite dark in the forest now, and required but a little stretch of the imagination for Tharber to fancy that the spirits of darkness stood before him, mocking and taunting him.

"You do not surely mean to leave me here to-night?" he said, almost in a voice of entreaty. "I assure you I have

never done any thing to injure you—why need you be so cruel to me?"

A contemptuous expression was all the answer vouchsafed, and then Dan and his companion turned to move away. But when he had gone a few steps, the former came back, and bending his lips close to Theodore's ear, hissed:

"Don't fret, my brave boy. Maybe somebody'll come along and liberate ye. The woods is full of red-skias, they say, what don't feel good toward men of your color, and then there's any quantity o' wild animals. Atween 'em all, sayin' no harm o' rattlesnakes, it ain't likely ye'll suffer long!"

And with these fiendish remarks he was gone.

Theodore did not feel worse, now that he was left alone, for with all the misery of his painful situation, he certainly preferred solitude to the presence of those who would mock at his sufferings.

Still, now that he had an abundance of time for thought, he did not feel at ease in mind, no more than in body. It was possible that some kind friend might come to his relief, and on that possibility he tried to hang many a hope. But then he knew very well that against this possibility was interposed the certainty of a speedy death from pure physical torture, unless some kindly hand came to his relief.

A single effort convinced him that he could not by any possibility effect his own escape. His hands were firmly bound, and then he was locked to the sapling as closely as the cords could be drawn. He had a keen hunting-knife at his back, a pair of pistols upon either side, a rifle leaning against a tree, not ten feet distant, where it had been left by his cruel foes. But he could obtain none of them—was as utterly helpless as if entirely disarmed.

The minutes dragged along their tedious length, each an hour of suspense, while the last tinges of day faded into perfect night. Several times Theodore felt disposed to cry for help, but he reflected how useless such a cry would be, and that it would add to his danger rather than otherwise. Still his position had become so painful that he seemed on the very point of crying out in very anguish, and it required all his powers of will to keep back the groans that would rise despite him.

Presently he heard a movement in the forest, not far distant. A ray of hope sprung up in his soul. If it was only some human being ! He listened attentively, and was soon satisfied, so far as this fact was concerned. Those steady, careful footsteps could only be made by a man. And they were passing by him at some distance, moving toward the settlement.

It might be Indian, or foe, or friend. Whichever the case should prove, he determined to run the risk, and call for help. Even if it brought him speedy death he could hardly fear it longer.

He called three times in quick succession :

" Help ! help ! HELP ! "

Then he paused and listened again. Possibly his cry might be unheard. No, the footsteps were coming that way, more rapidly, and from the general character of the tread the sufferer at once took courage.

" Where be ye ? What in the old boy is the matter ? "

Oh, how his heart beat now ! He should know that voice among all the voices of earth, though he had never heard it until that day.

" Here, here, help me ! " he gasped, groaning now, even in the moment of his great joy.

Green Jacket knew the voice now, and hastened to the spot from which it came. He was no less surprised than the young man at the meeting, and while he was cutting loose the cords, poured out a string of questions, to which Tawdore had no time to reply.

" How in the old boy come ye here ? Was it some of that runnygale's doin's ? I'll pay him for all this. Which way did they go ? How long have they been gone ? Did ye see any thing of the woman ? "

Thunder dropped upon his knees as the bonds were loosened, but soon regained his feet, rubbing the suffering ankles with both hands.

It needed but a few words for the relation of his story, and then Green Jacket recounted so much of his adventures as the reader is already familiar with, ending by saying :

" I seen right away that they must hev found her, and I set off for the settlement ; but I didn't go the common route,

for fear they'd get spies posted along. And ye see it's lucky I didn't, for I shouldn't hev found ye if I had. And an ail night's lodgin' wouldn't hev been pleasant out here. We old trappers wouldn't mind it, maybe, but for such as you, what ain't used to it, the night would seem rather long?"

"Yes; I imagine it would," Theodore replied. "In fact, it did not seem to me that I could live much longer. But, now, I feel as good as new, almost, and only want to come across the men who put me here."

"What would you do with them?" the gunmaker asked, very quietly.

The young man hesitated, and did not fully answer. Seeing his confusion, the other continued:

"Only one of these men is really to blame. Dan Duffey rules every thing around him—I don't know why, but he does. Once get him out of the way, and the rest of the men would be civil as ye please. Now, I don't want to make any threats, 'cause a man never can tell just what course matters will take. But it's my opinion that if I meet Dan Duffey where circumstances look right, SUTHIN' WILL HAPPEN!"

Something of a silence followed, and then Theodore said:

"You are going to the village, if I mistake not?"

"Yer right. I'm goin' to keep an eye on that confounded runnygade. That's a mystery about that I can't make out—only this, that *suthin'* ain't right."

"Can I go with you?"

There was a little hesitation, and then Green Jacket returned:

"Yes; on condition that ye keep a clus tongue in yer head."

"I promise that."

Theodore began to think his thirst for adventure was about to be satiated.

Not more than fifteen or twenty minutes later they crept carefully into the village. Only a single light was to be seen, and all was perfectly quiet. Green Jacket shook his head in a very unsatisfied manner.

"I don't like this, and I don't understand it, too," he muttered. "That light is in Tim Nolan's. Tim was there, and knows. I'll go and ask him."

Not stopping even to rap, upon gaining the door of the cabin where the light appeared, Green Jacket threw it open, and stalked in. Only one man was visible, and he was about making preparations for retiring. His surprise and dismay at the sudden intrusion can be but feebly described in words. He hastened to meet the gunmaker, and endeavored to express his regret for what had transpired, although from his countenance the words he used were almost inaudible.

"Never mind that now," the strange man exclaimed. "I want to know where Dan Duffey is. If you can tell me that, and *tell me the truth*, I'll overlook all that you done this afternoon."

"All I kin tell yer is this: he hardly stopped here at all. He and the woman and her father had business here, and they only got 'em out, and got on, and rode off."

"Off—which way?"

"To'rd the East."

"Did the woman want to go?"

"I don't know—I didn't hear her say any thing."

"But ye know pretty well by her actions whether she wanted to go or not."

"Well, to tell the truth, Green Jacket, I don't think she wanted to go. But, the old man seemed to hinder her from her, and she didn't say a word. They rode off, she between 'em, and I heard Dan say he was sorry he hadn't cut yer wizen, and knocked this other feller on the head. But, some of the boys hev gone back now to let ye both loose."

Green Jacket did not wait to hear any more, but turned about and left the cabin.

When fairly outside he drew Theodore toward him, and said, in very cautious tones:

"I'm goin' after them fellers, till I know more about this thing. Do you want to go along?"

Theodore was hardly ready to answer, for after what had transpired during the evening he had little disposition for a further encounter with Dan Duffey, unless he could have the opportunity of shooting him down at first sight. Yet he would certainly have the opportunity for addition to his already obtained stock of adventure, and he finally signified his intention of going.

"Ye want to think it over well," his companion said, significantly.

"I have. I am ready to take the risk," was his firm answer.

"Then come on."

And Green Jacket, who had not stopped during the brief conversation, lengthened his strides so that it required Theodore's best efforts to keep pace with him.

CHAPTER V.

EVENTS OF A NIGHT.

"Ye don't expect to overtake them?" Theodore inquired, rather dubiously, as they left the evidences of civilization behind, and struck into the dense forest, through which a very indifferent wagon-trail led.

"Can't say, of course," responded Green Jacket. "But, I don't know any good reason why we can't. They must go in this trail, can't do any other way, anyhow, to advantage, and sartin we kin go as fast as they'll ride. Ye see thar's low branches, and uneven places—all these things to look out for in the night."

Then in a more reflective manner he added:

"They may know some track off that I do'n't. If they dew, why that's a big trump load in their hand. A good dog, now, would put that all right, tew, but we hain't one. When the moon's up we shan't need any, but that won't be for an hour now. So I guess the best we kin do will be to push right on and just as likely as not we'll come acrost 'em somewhere."

And, in accordance with this determination, away they went, over the rough trail, keeping a sharp look-out for any "signs," but encountered nothing save the monotonous forest, which stretched darkly ahead, as though interminable.

They had left the settlement far behind ere the moon rolled its silver disk up among the eastern trees, and some time more passed ere the level rays were of any practical use to the two explorers.

But finally they came to an open stretch in the trail, and here the moon's beams fell full upon the ground.

"Here's our place," said the gunmaker, stopping short. "Let's see if they've been by here."

He bent down, examining the path closely from side to side, but rose presently with an exclamation of impatience.

"Youngster," he said, "sure as the old boy we're lookin' up the wrong tree! *They hadn't been this way tonight!*"

And Theodore realized from his own observations that the speaker was right. Quite a dew had already fallen, and the earth was moist and yielding. But not a sign of any horse having passed that way could be discovered. Their own foot-prints were perfectly visible, no matter how careful their movements.

"Well, what can we do in such a case?" he asked, biting his lips with vexation.

"Do? Why what in the old boy *kin* we do but go back and find where they branched off? That ain't a nice job, I allow, but it won't be so very bad, as the moon'll help us, and they didn't leave this road far back, I'm satisfied."

They hurried back, moving as fast as they could, and kept up a proper scrutiny of the way. Their attention was divided between the trail, in some places lighted by the moon and in others quite dark from the long shadows, and the margin of the road, where they looked for any by-ways which the objects of their pursuit could have taken. But a considerable distance was passed over, and as yet no traces could be discovered.

Theodore ventured the remark that they must have lost them, but Green Jacket thought differently.

"How in the old boy could we lose 'em?" he demanded. "Don't ye see thar ain't but one road they could have gone?"

"Yes, I see that very plainly, and I see that they haven't gone it. I will just bet you something that they are simply stowed away back at the settlement."

Green Jacket seemed to lose a trifle of his assurance.

"Can it be that Tim Nolan did me on that yarn?" he mused.

"It is possible, I declare, and it looks very much that way. But, it'll never do to give in that way. We must find the trail."

Glancing down again, he beheld, almost at his feet, the indications of horses having passed that way, and another moment's search satisfied him that now they were on the right track.

"Here's the marks," he said, pointing down in triumph, and there was could no longer doubt the fact.

"Now which way did they go?"

This was not so easy to settle. For some distance along the road the tracks could be made out, only barely distinguishable, owing to the hardness of the road, and then all evidences seemed suddenly lost.

The way was bordered with undergrowth, and beyond this the forest was here or there choked up, so that horses could only pass at certain points, in either direction. But upon which side, or where, they had left the principal trail, no clue seemed to present. Even the gunsmith, who seemed as much at home on the trail as at his bench, shook his head often in doubt, as he passed back and forth, scanning closely every inch of the margin.

Presently he gave an exclamation of satisfaction, opened the bushes and passed from sight. He was very speedily followed by Thaurer, who found him pushing through the forest, here quite open, with the avidity of a hound.

"We're on the road; we've got 'em this time," he rejoiced, never pausing, but pressing along with such stillness that his companion was almost obliged to run in order to keep near him.

"Now I'll tell ye what ye do," said Green Jacket. "You keep a sharp look-out ahead, so that we won't run into 'em, in any kind of a way, and I'll stir up the tracks. They're pretty fresh, and we'll have a long fight if they could make 'em through this rough road. Though I must say I don't quite like the way they seem to lead now."

"What way?"

"Right toward the Indian country! But, maybe they'll change by 'n' by."

Thaurer did not feel particularly at ease, when he realized that they were hastening at this rapid rate toward the region of a common enemy, but he consoled himself with the reflection that they must soon overtake the party of which they were in pursuit. So he kept all his senses on the alert for any

signs of such a consummation, while Green Jacket, with a skill which seemed almost instinct, deciphered the trail, and thus, side by side, they hastened away through the forest, checked by the bright moonlight.

The moon had mounted higher and higher, so that now its almost vertical rays reached into the forest depths, and made the darksome retreats quite enlivened.

Our two adventurers were still proceeding. Theodore keeping a look-out in advance, and Green Jacket minding the trail, when the latter looked up and uttered a sharp sign of warning.

The young man stopped, and the other hastened to his side.

"We must keep pretty shady now," he said, almost in a whisper, "for we must be very high enter 'em."

Theodore looked around in surprise.

"I don't see any signs," he said, with an inquiring accent.

"Nor dew I. But I know what this is—that's sign 'em. Jest over that next rise we come to the river. Somewhere about that we shall find our game. Those yer tracks are mighty fresh now, and they can't be far away."

Both crept along as carefully as possible, and soon had gained a spot upon the brow of the little elevation from which they could overlook the scene before them. It was one of grand beauty. Right in the foreground rolled a broad, silver stream, flowing in the moonlight with a strange murmurance, while its banks were heavily timbered, and at a little distance on either side rose hills of beautiful proportions.

But the grandeur of the scene was utterly lost upon the gunmaker and his companion. They had no time or occasion to admire the grand or lovely.

Passing upon the hill, while all around seemed hushed to a more than earthly silence, they listened, and not in vain.

"Hark!" whispered Green Jacket, "don't you hear that?"

They both heard it—the sound of hoarse voices from below, and it required but a short time for them to decide that the party of which they were in search was within ear-shot of them, and consulting in regard to a place for crossing the stream.

Satisfied upon this point, Green Jacket turned to his companion.

"Till ye what I want to do now," he said in a whisper so low that it seemed to die upon his lips. "This thing is turnin' just as I was in hopes. They don't want to stop this side the river, but right over on *that* side they'll be about sure to live over, for they must be very well satisfied that nobody kin find 'em here. Till they git to the other side the gal'll be safe enough, for they're busy with suthin' else. Now, right above here, not more'n a quarter of a mile, is a good ford, where we kin wade over, and I mayther think steal the march on 'em. It will be a trifle perplexin' to 'em to meet us on the other side, I fancy!"

And the old gunmaker indulged in a laugh as silent as his words.

"If we don't get ahead of 'em we'll get there afore they have their horses put out, and then the very old boy will be to pay! But, it won't do to lose any time, though!"

They hastened away, picking their route through the forest with a very much difficulty, and starting soon upon the shore quite a distance above the party they were following, yet in full view of the spot where they intended to cross.

The river was very wide here, and rippled over a gravelly bed, giving indications of its shallowness. Just as they were about stepping in, the gunmaker placed a hand upon his companion's arm, and pointed down the stream.

The bright moonlight resting upon the surface rendered every object perfectly distinct, even at the distance which intervened between the two parties. So our friends, standing upon the bank, plainly saw the three horsemen enter the line of light and ride over toward the opposite bank.

"Well have to wait for them, now," Theodore remarked, settling himself upon the shore, for he was very much fatigued.

"Not long; they're half way across, already. What in the old boy! Why, the gal has run away, right in the middle of the river?"

Theater sprang to his feet and saw the confirmation of Green Jack's not very definite words.

At first he could only see that the parties seemed moving up the stream. But a moment later a turn of the direction showed that one of the persons was in advance, a woman, and that the others seemed in pursuit. This supposition was cor-

firmed as oaths and brutal words came to the ears of the listeners.

Even Green Jacket manifested considerable excitement. He rose to his feet and bent over as far as possible, shading his eyes while he directed his gaze most intently upon the party in the water.

"She's ahead; she's got a good start," he muttered. "I wouldn't wonder if she led 'em a good race. Maybe she'll get up as far as this, and if she does I'm a poor goose if that ain't hot work. I won't see that poor girl abused so—I don't care a fig who does it. It can't be nuch of a father that treats her that way, and I don't think I'll respect his authority any great deal—not if I know myself. Hello, her horse has stumbled—she's off! No she ain't either. By George, she rides like a born queen; just swung herself back at arm's end, as handy as ever ye seen a horseback performer do. I tell you that gal is worth hevin'! That she's all right now, and goin' ag'in; but it's delayed her so I guess the mean alligators'll catch her. There! she turns her horse toward the bank. She's goin' to try the woods. But I guess she won't git 'em. No, they're gainin' on her fast now: I guess her horse is hurt. There, she's out of sight now, but they are so close that ain't any help for her. Well, never mind; she's got friends nigher than she thinks, poor gal!"

The moment the attention of the pursuing party was directed to the shore, Green Jacket grasped the hand of his companion and together they plunged into the water. It was rather rapid, but quite shallow; and in a very few minutes they stood upon the opposite bank. Here they paused, and looking in hasty shadow, looked back to watch the movements of the party on the shore they had so recently quitted.

Scarcely had they seated themselves, for both were very much exhausted by their long and difficult work, when the two women appeared, and once more entered the stream. The woman seemed to be regarded as a captive now, and one of them grasped her bridle-rein, as they commenced to ford.

Green Jacket rose to his feet almost reluctantly.

"It's time for us to be movin'," he said, pointing significantly down the little river.

The woman was indeed a captive. She had made an un-

successful effort to escape from the two men who held her in a position evidently distasteful to her, and, since that had failed, she must know very well that hereafter she would be much more closely guarded, and very likely that her future prospective would not be more pleasant.

Her father took the bridle, and led her horse over, keeping a sharp look-out for any movement on the part of his daughter calculated to indicate another attempt at escape, while Dan Duffey went in advance, and selected the way.

They were not very long in reaching the opposite bank, and here the horses were drawn up on a grassy slope, while the elder of the party said to Dan :

"You look out for a good stopping-place, and I'll keep *her* here till you come back."

Dan dismounted from his horse, and surrendering the bridle to his companion, set about exploring the vicinity. He was not gone a great length of time, however, before he returned, saying, in loud, careless tones, which indicated the security he felt :

"I don't think we'll find any better place for the horses than this. They kin feed as much as they like, and right back here, on this dry rise, we can make our nest as nice as **a young rattler under a leaf.**"

They moved back a little way, till at a signal from Dan the horses stopped, and the father, dismounting, waved his hand toward Duffey, saying :

"Take yer bride, and make her as comfortable as accommodations will admit. I will see to the horses."

Dan Duffey listened forward, his wicked heart full of satisfaction, and extended his arms to lift See from the saddle. But he recoiled a trifle when he found himself gripped by the throat, as with a grip of iron, and the harsh voice of Green Jacket ringing in his ears :

"Not much ye don't ! Ye've got a little account to settle with me, first of all ! Now *I*re got ye, and I may never hev another good chance."

The villain writhed and struggled furiously, and attempted to get at a weapon, but it was in vain. He had not more than his match, physically, and, besides, he was too much astounded at the appearance of the man he least of all wished

or expected to meet, that he was almost unable to summon his energies to the contest.

At the same moment Theodore had performed his allotted part of the work. Springing out in front of the crowd latter, he had presented a pistol, coupling the presentation with a neat little speech, in which he had enjoined the most perfect silence upon that personage.

"Move from your tracks, lift a hand, or speak a word, and you die like a dog!"

The astounded man having no desire to enter on the life beyond, remained, trembling, with the rifle in his hand, while Green Jacket continued to shake and exhort Da-a De-y.

"You miserable, low, contemptible creature—you skunk in human disguise," he exclaimed, every emphatic word accompanied by a shake, "I allers knew you was the essence of meanness, but I declare I never did think quite so little of ye as this. I did rayther think yed be a yodd above persecutin' helpless, unprotected women-kind; and for man to one woman too! What a show yed make through the civilized States, where people are educated, and how they be bringin' up. Why, a man could make an independent fortune there in a few days, exhibitin' ye at a cent a head. I'd take ye there, if it wasn't so much work; but as it is, I guess it would be better for the world and all the folks in it, if I were to duck ye intew this here drink. Ye can't swim, as I happen to know, and if ye dew I'll see to it that ye don't swim far."

Even while speaking, he had been gradually backing the miscreant in the direction of the river. What his purpose may have been we can only imagine from his words; but, be it what it may, it was destined to an interruption.

Just as Green Jacket ceased speaking, something like a small, white cloud might have been seen for a moment upon the opposite bank of the river, a strange, hoarse report came across the water, and almost at the same moment a bullet, with a peculiar whistle, landed through the trees just above their heads, and struck with a dull "chunk" in a large limb not far away.

Naturally enough, such a greeting caused a momentary consternation, and when Theodore and his companion had recovered a trifle, they were standing quite alone.

It was but a moment, yet both the men they had in charge had broken away, springing upon their horses, and were dashing through the forest, as though a demon pursued them. They had realized something of this, but were not prepared to find, when they looked for the captive, that she too was gone.

CHAPTER VI.

A WANDERER.

GREEN JACKET appeared the very picture of mystification, while Theodore was quite speechless with wonder.

The former was the first, however, to give vent to his feelings in low words:

"I'd just like to know what in the old boy the meanin' of all this is," he muttered. "It beats any slight-o'-hand I ever seen. Just a minute ago I had that miserable runnygade fast by the throat, and was goin' to pitch him intew the drink. Now I don't know what has become of him, or the old man, or the woman we've tramped so far to find. That's a big mystery of some kind a-doin' with that shot. Didn't ye notice what a peculiar sound that was, and what a deuce of a whistle to the bullet? Them fellers knowed what it meant, but they didn't stop to tell us."

"Very likely you noticed more about that than I did," returned Theodore. "I only know that I ducked when the ball came, and when I looked up my man was making tracks, on horseback. It was all quicker than a flash, and when I saw that he was gone I looked after the woman. But, all I could hear of her was her horse making good time through the bushes."

"Then you heard the horse? Why didn't you say so? Which way was it going?"

"That I could not tell. I was uncertain, and while I was trying to make out in my own mind, the sounds ceased."

"Can't be she's gone far. Possibly her horse didn't like the noise of the bullet, and took the reins to himself for a waya-

But, a runaway horse, in the woods, isn't a safe means of travel. We'd better look for 'em."

Losing no farther time, the two men set out.

Just behind them rose quite a sharp ascent, up which it was by no means probable that the fair rider had gone. The alternative, then, was to look upon either side. To this end they separated, agreeing to meet at some point in the interior, within half an hour.

Green Jacket sent his companion up the river, taking the opposite course himself. He did this that he might take the greater risk upon his own shoulders, since the latter route led more nearly in the direction taken by Dan Daffy and his companion.

If Louisa had taken this direction, she had most likely fallen into the hands of her persecutors, or would very speedily do so; consequently there was need of the most earnest efforts to find her whereabouts, ere disaster came to all their plans.

Almost bounding along and stopping to listen, the scout soon put a such a distance between himself and the starting-point, that his anticipations of overtaking the missing woman began to be small indeed. The great forest stretched away on all sides in its magnitude, and when he paused to listen, not a breath or sound came to his ears. The silence was oppressive and discouraging.

"I'd better go and look after the boy, or he'll be lost, too," Green Jacket muttered.

Then, turning his face in the direction he would need to take, he continued:

"I always hate to have one of these young sprouts with me. They're just as much care as a baby, and then they never amount to much. True this fellow seems to have a pretty good idea, in general, of what he ought to do, but after all he's only a boy in this kind of business."

Almost between each successive step the scout, for such was his present character, stooped to listen. In such a place it would not do to rush forward recklessly, no matter in how great a hurry he might be.

Suddenly he stopped short, and the general alertness changed in a moment to close and intense application.

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Suddenly he stopped short, and the general alertness changed in a moment to close and intense application.

A moment only he seemed in doubt, and then he drew himself up, whispering, for no other ears than his own :

"Some one's coming ; I wonder who it can be."

A trifling examination of his weapons, to see that all were ready for service in case of need, and then he glided away like some strange shadow, through the woods.

The intruder, whoever he might be, was not coming that way, and it was to reach the vicinity of his path that Green Jacket made this movement. He was successful, gaining the cover of a fallen tree-top, a few yards in advance of the other party.

"That is not Thurber," Green Jacket soliloquized. "No, it is a taller, larger man than him. It is none of them other chaps, either. If I suspected *that* was the feller what sent the bullet, I'd be inclined to return the compliment. Awgh ! Good gracious ! what a lookin' object ! Well, I've heard tell of the 'old boy,' but I never seen him till now ! He come from whar the boy ought to hev been ! I don't fancy that much. It may be the boy ain't all right when I find him. If ye've been a dewin' in chief, Injun, devil, or white man, whatever ye be, that'll be a day of reckonin'."

He hastened away, still preserving his caution, and looking intently on all sides for any traces of his companion.

We will follow the fortunes of Theodore for a few moments.

When he took the direction pointed out by his companion, the younger man felt a thrill of impulse quite foreign to his usual emotions. He had every reason to suppose that the fair object of their search had taken this route, and if so the probabilities were that he would find her. This was the light of his ambition. Not only did he feel an earnest enthusiasm in her behalf, but an emotion deeper, more inexplicable, had taken possession of his faculties. It was not enough that he would save her from danger, he wished to learn more of her life — her life which had in it so much of mystery and, to him, romance — that the future was rather an enigmatical future. And now there was a probability of all those yearnings and aspirations being satisfied. He had only to find her.

Only to find her. But then he did not realize how much of a task that might be.

Back to the ford he hastened, and this was accomplished

very easily, since he had just passed over the ground, in search of the party which had so mysteriously slipped from their grasp.

Here he looked out upon the stream, as the thought occurred to him that possibly the maiden might seek the other bank, but seeing no indications of any effort on her part to cross the river, he turned and plunged into the forest.

He found himself at once in a labyrinth, and in a state of uncertainty. The woods lay all about him, a great, unexplored wilderness, and in any direction a horse and rider might have passed with perfect ease and freedom. He listened, but could hear no sound. What could he do, or in which way should he go?

Now he began to realize more than ever the great skill and experience necessary for a thorough woodsman. The task which had seemed so trifling when there was but one way in which he could go, and which it was probable the object of his search had taken also, now swelled to herculean proportions as the woods lay now multiplied and diversified in every direction.

He stopped and looked about in perfect bewilderment. Oh, that he could ask a moment's advice of his late companion, or have his erudite knowledge for a guide! But it was too late.

He did, under these circumstances, what first occurred to him—took a course leading him as nearly as he could judge in a central direction, and hastened onward, hoping that some different conformation of the land would occur to simplify his task.

He was still proceeding, not very far from the point of setting out, when he was attracted by a rustling noise close beside and partially behind him.

Usually it does not require a long time to turn one's head, but before the young man could execute this move, even he found himself cramped by the neck, and looked to the earth with a power far superior to that of any mortal man he had ever encountered.

So very sudden had been the onset that the robber was now far from him through the forest, and ere he was fully aware of his condition a grasp was fastened upon his throat which threatened to crush the entire neck.

Looking up with a half-strangling gaze, he saw above

a bending form of such terrible mien that he involuntarily gasped out an exclamation of astonishment.

The frame was extraordinarily large, and of its great muscular power he was even then painfully aware. But this mighty body was very poorly clothed, being covered with nothing better than a mass of rags, fastened and held together by a most original and crude device.

The hair was long, resting in wild, matted masses upon the shoulders, very thickly streaked with gray. The beard was enormously full and long, very nearly white in color, and floating in wildness before a face which was well calculated to fill even the bravest man with alarm.

The eyes were the principal feature. Deep-set, and lighted with a most ferocious glow, perfectly discernible even through the night, they seemed to penetrate the young man's very soul, and freeze his blood with horror. He had looked into the eyes of a maniac before, and it needed no confirmation to satisfy him that at that moment he was lying there at the mercy of a frenzied man. He expected no fate but a terrible death, and mentally he prayed that this might come speedily. In the act of death there could be no suffering equal to lying there under the glow of those burning eyes, and hearing those infernal cries of satisfaction with which the maniac crushed his victim down into the dust, and brandished before his eyes a fearful knife!

But just as he was on the point of striking, some fancy seemed to cross the madman's mind, for he paused, and raising Theodore by the neck, gazed into his features in the dull moonlight.

Only a moment, and then relaxing his hold he allowed the young man to fall back upon the ground.

"Mistaken again—what a fool!" he laughed. "I made a mistake. Did it scare you? Where have they gone? Is *she* with them?"

He asked the questions in such a tone of voice that Theodore saw at once a method in his madness, and realized why his life had been so nearly sacrificed. But the present respite gave him opportunity to produce a pistol, which he did as a preventative to any further demonstration from his not very trusty companion.

He got upon his feet without difficulty, and by coaxing his injured throat somewhat, managed to answer:

"They went down the river. I do not know where she is. Who is she?"

When he proposed the question the madman turned sharp, and gazed upon him as though in doubt or anger. But, after a moment he answered as calmly and coolly as possible for words to be framed:

"Don't you know? Well, you never will!"

And with a low, chuckling laugh he turned upon his heel, and strode away into the depths of the forest, moving with a strange rapidity, and yet almost as silently as the shades of night.

Theodore stood almost confounded by the strange scene. He was burning with anxiety to know more of the wild man, but shrunk from calling him back, remembering too distinctly the fearful conflict, or rather surprise, which had come near costing him so dear.

Very soon it was too late to recall the strange being if he could, and then the young man began to cast about him as to the course most proper for him to pursue. Should he proceed in his search for the hunted girl, or strike over and intercept Green Jacket?

He decided upon the latter, because now he felt certain that if she had fled from a knowledge of the madman, she had taken a course nearly or quite directly inland. If he could find the gamekeeper, and communicate the knowledge to him, it seemed more than probable that together they might devise upon a plan which would bring success.

Picking up his rifle and finding it was un injured, he reprimed the weapon, and then set forth once more, keeping a very sharp look out in every direction for danger.

He had gone some distance, and was gathering round a little fearful lest he should miss of Green Jacket, when he was startled by a low, sharp:

"Halt!"

On hearing the word he was not a little surprised and startled. It did not sound like the voice he wished to hear, and any other man in that place was not a friend!

He fingered the lock of his piece uneasily, and started to

discover the whereabouts of his challenger, but all to no purpose.

"Pat down that gun and come here!" continued the same voice, in a sharp whisper.

But he heard more distinctly now, and recognized the tones.

It was Green Jacket who spoke!

Without stopping to obey the first part of the command he sprang to the side of his companion, a dreadful load all at once lifted from his heart.

But, the scout grasped his arm in a strange manner, and nodding his head in the direction whence he had come, asked, in a solemn tone:

"Did you not see him?"

"Did I? I should rather think I did!"

And the young man displayed his damaged neck.

"Why, what? How in the old boy was that done?"

Theodore related the facts as the reader already understands them, and Green Jacket listened with the most intense interest.

"That's a critter I never heard tell of," he exclaimed, when his companion had finished. "Strange I haven't, but I never happened tew. Seems he's on this woman's track, tew; I wonder what in the old boy it means?"

But mere speculations would never solve the mystery, and at the present time they had no leisure for deliberation. Theodore stated his convictions in regard to the route taken by the girl, and was somewhat surprised to find that they quite coincided with the views of his more experienced companion.

As they set out in the direction it seemed to them most likely the fugitive woman must have taken, Green Jacket bowed his head in perplexity, and Theiler heard him mutter:

"Strange how things are mixed up about this feminine! I never seed any thing like it in my born days. Here's a feller that looks as though he might be kinder respectable, and the biggest villain in the known world, and a crazy man what looks just like I used to dream the old boy did, when I'd been naughty and thought he'd come after me, in my younger days—them three and us two, and we're all mixed up in it, and don't know head nor tail—we don't, anyway! Well, it is a singular mixture!"

He was silent for a moment, and then turned toward Theodore, demanding, almost sharply :

"Youngster, whar is this goin' to end?"

Of all the possible questions in the world which could have been asked him, no other would have been more completely a puzzle to the young man than this.

"I'm sure I haven't any iden, whatever," he returned.

"But you've somethin' in view," the other persisted. "It can hardly be that ye're *in love* with her!"

"What an idea!"

"Just what I was thinking. What a family of relations she must have!"

Tharber turned and gazed full upon his companion.

"Are you, too, crazy?" he demanded.

"No, I guess not. But, hark! Didn't you hear something?"

They both listened intently.

"I hear a horse," said Green Jacket, after a moment. "Some of them are coming this way. Lay slowly now. That's a good place behind that big tree. I'll stay here beside this bush."

Theodore could hear the sounds now, and knew that some one was coming that way, not rapidly, but at a walk. He hastened to cover, and with a beating heart awaited the next phase of affairs.

CHAPTER VII.

UP THE CLIFF.

PRESENTLY a dark, moving shape was discernible, not far away, and in a short time it appeared more plainly, in the form of a horse and rider. And more than this, it could be seen that the rider was a woman.

Of course only one woman would be riding in that forest at that time, and with a few words of caution, the guard here hastened forward, soon as he was aware of the fact, and was followed scarcely a moment later by Theodore.

At first the girl seemed surprised, but very soon recovered her self, on finding that she had encountered friends again, and gave her hand to each.

"How singular that we should meet again," she said. "I cannot understand it. I supposed you far back, near the river."

"There isn't much chance about it," Green Jacket said, freely. "We were looking for you. But how far from the river do you suppose we are? I mean the place where we—

we—"

"Yes, yes, I know. But I have no particular idea how far away we may be."

"Not above a mile, if as much."

"Not more! Can it be that in all this time I have ridden only that short distance?"

"Most likely you've ridden much farther. But it's a very little matter to ride in the direction one wants to take. Fact is, just at this particular time you was a-ridin' toward the river, rather than away from it."

"Can that be?"

"It is a fact."

A shudder, as of deadly fear seemed to come over the woman, and she glanced around, as though striving to penetrate the dark forest which surrounded them.

"Have you seen—"

She paused, although fearful to express in words the image which floated before her mind, and then added:

"Have you seen any thing horrible?"

"Well, m'ama, I don't know how that bein' they call the 'old boy' looks, but if it's any worse than what we seen just now, I don't never hope I may."

"Don't! Don't!" the lady almost shrieked. "Do not say any thing more. If he is in this region, for Heaven's sake let us be getting away, as fast as possible!"

After a moment's pause and rode away, Green Jacket keeping close to her side, and asking:

"Where or which way do you want to go?" "I'm better acquainted in this region than you. We want to see you safe out of this, and we'll draw any thing to help you along."

"Oh, I am very grateful; more than mere words can tell,"

she replied, with an earnestness that seemed to Theodore the offspring of direst necessity. "I can not tell where I wish to go. Anywhere, that we may be safe from *him* and *them*!"

"You must be pretty tired by this time, I should say."

"Tired? Ah, that word very poorly expresses my feeling. But I can endure anything, so that I may eventually escape."

"Well, I was going to say that so-and-so like five or six miles from here, I should judge, there's a spot where I think we could hide, and never be found out by those prowling creatures. If you feel able to ride that far we'll try it, for it's the only place I know of in this part of the country."

"Oh yes, certainly. I feel very strong with such brave friends to assist me. But I fear you do not understand the nature of the work you have undertaken."

Theodore found an opportunity for speech at that moment, and did not fail to improve it, inasmuch as he had been looking for the opportunity a long time.

"No, that is just where we are in the dark. We don't understand this matter at all, and wish you would explain some parts of it. Who is this wild man, that I have such good cause to remember?"

A pained expression passed over the woman's face, and after a momentary silence she replied:

"I assure you I appreciate your kind assistance and protection, but I can not answer any questions now. Unless you are willing to help me still, only knowing that I am a woman in dire need, then I must bid you farewell, and seek my own fortunes as best I may!"

There was a depth of sadness in the tone which touched Theodore, and he hastened to say:

"I fear I spoke without thought. Please excuse me, and I assure you I shall be careful how I use my tongue."

"That's what I like in Green Jacket," said the woman, "for we all see, the better it will be for us. If we know any thing about it, and there may be rides both ways, for all we know."

A deep silence fell upon the party, only broken up by the clatter of the horse, and the lighter steps of the two men who walked beside it.

Mile after mile they went onward through the forest, picking their way at times through devious dingles and obscure re-

treats, then climbing hills and emerging upon more open and favorable ground.

Green Jacket walked beside the bridle-rein, leading the horse over the more unfavorable localities, while Thurber followed at a little distance, keeping his eyes and ears open for any sounds which might indicate the presence of other parties.

Finally they wound around the base of a great ledge, into a cavern which seemed rather the creation of fancy than any actual rock arranged by nature. On three sides rose a precipitous wall of rock, only broken at the spot of their entry, while on the other side flowed a deep, dark river. The area was some one hundred feet in length by half as much in width, and notwithstanding its situation, was dry and comfortable. Several trees of small growth covered the space, and at one end grew a quantity of grass, toward which the horse was already casting longing eyes.

"You see this," Green Jacket remarked, pointing to the various features around him. "I fancy this is one of the snug-gest little nests to be found. This here is the only path by which anybody can get here, only one over the ledge, and no common man would undertake that unless he was anxious for a job of neck-breaking. This river is deep, so that it ain't fordable, and there is no chance of anybody gettin' in here by accident. There's grass for the horse, plenty of water, and a good dry place to sleep on. Then I've got a little feed in my wallet that will do for lunch by and by. So I don't see what we kin do better than to stay here through the day, and go on again when it comes dark. How does that strike you?"

As may be supposed, both his companions were delighted with the idea of resting, and as their present retreat seemed reasonably safe, they were not disposed to search farther.

The first of them was relieved of his saddle, and allowed to graze in the green grass, a stick was so arranged as to prevent him from going away, and then the party threw themselves upon the earth.

In a very few minutes the young girl, who had chosen her rest-place close under the overhanging ledge, was sleeping soundly, though often she started, and sometimes even cried out in fancied alarm.

"Poor dear," Green Jacket said, in tones unusually tender,

"how bad that she is persecuted in such shape. I declare, I am going to take a new policy. When I see one of her persecutors ag'in, I'm jist goin' to let a thin lift of daylight right through him; and I declare, I don't believe there would be any sin it—now, do you?"

Theodore hesitated to answer positively so great a question. He had but recently come to the wild western border, and he shrank from bloodshed, wild as were the scenes in which he found himself acting a part. Naturally he would only have advocated the shedding of blood in self-defense, but now the sufferings of this unknown woman had touched his heart, and he finally declared:

"I don't, for they can't be human. No being with any humanity about him would persecute a poor woman in this way."

"Human or not, it doesn't make any difference to me. The one that sees first will shoot first. So we want to keep those eyes of ours open and our powder dry. But they can't find our trail till it's light, so we may as well sleep two or three hours. See, it's coming daylight in the east, as true as the old boy. So we'd better take a few winks while we can, and then have our eyes open for business."

Yes, the first faint beams of day could be plainly seen now lighting up the sky beyond the tops of the trees, and reflecting that in a few hours at farthest, the party would be in danger, should their enemies undertake to follow up their trail.

The two men threw themselves upon the ground, their rifles resting beneath their knees, ready for service in case of alarm, but ere they found oblivion, Theodore could not refrain from propounding the question nearest his heart:

"How afraid she seems of that crazy man! Who or what do you suppose he is?"

Green Jacket raised himself from the earth, and glanced quickly around, as though the horrible thought of a secret persecution and even murder might be close at hand, and then exclaimed, almost sharply:

"See here, boy, if you say any thin' more about that cinner just as I'm goin' to sleep, I'll be very likely to punch yer head! What in the old boy do ye suppose I know about

him? Warrh! What in fury did ye want to say any thing about him for?"

And another glance around, more searching than before, showed the uneasiness aroused by the remark of his companion.

"Well," replied Theodore, rather dryly, "the feeling around my throat prompted the remark. But if I ain't afraid of him I shouldn't think you need be."

"I ain't afraid," growled Green Jacket; "but I don't want to hear any more about the confounded critter!" and he threw himself upon the earth, as though determined to shut out all unpleasant sights and fancies.

Theodore followed his example, highly satisfied that in one direction he had an advantage over his reckless companion; for no matter how much he shuddered at the thought of another encounter with the wild man, it was evident that he did not regard the strange being with such an unalterable horror as did Green Jacket.

The morning sun had peeped above the horizon, as though to assure itself the earth was still waiting for its coming, and then wheeled its broad disk grandly up into the azure sky. The level beams glared through the great forests, and on the heights of sleeping ice, giving to the late darkness retreats a new and livelier appearance. Soft-winged birds flitted here and there, while the speckled trout leaped and glanced in the streams, as the first bright golden beams darted through the waters.

But our worried trio, reposing in fancied security in their hidden retreat, did not awake. The sleep of each was haunted by wild and fearful visions, be sure, but they did not awake. Only Green Jacket moved once, just before the sun appeared, and feeling in his mind that there could be no danger for an hour to come, gave himself up again to repose.

And so no one saw the wild, awful looking face which peered down from the bow of the cliff above, glowing with a light which no man will be feared. No one saw the slow, careful, noiseless steps with which he slid down the narrow, dangerous path, peering ever and anon to glare over the sleeping forms far below.

Down, rapidly nearer he came, growing more horrible, more

fiendlike in appearance as he drew nearer, his great white beard swaying over the face of the cliff as he threatened so unhesitatingly the narrow path where a single misstep would have been certain death. Those terrible, burning eyes glared with a fiendish purpose, and the long knife, now drawn from his belt, was brandished with fiercer exaltation.

At length he touched and stood upon the ground, close beside the sleeping woman, who changed position and moved uneasily at the moment. The wicked smile faded away; his eyes ran quickly up the fearful face of the rock where he had found his way down; the knife was returned quietly to its sheath, and he bent over the sleeping girl with bated breath.

His purpose had changed!

Green Jacket and Theodore were startled from their slumbers by what seemed a cry of distress, but, as neither of them had enjoyed an over peaceful sleep, they were not so much alarmed as would otherwise have been the case. Still, both sprung up, glanced at each other, and then at the spot where Louisa had been last seen.

She was not there, yet not far away.

Ten or fifteen feet above, on the face of the rugged cliff, they beheld her in the arms of that terrible maniac, being rapidly borne up the narrow and dangerous way! Their hearts seemed to freeze with horror at the spectacle. For a moment they stood as though riveted to the spot, palsied at the sight.

Then Green Jacket raised his rifle. But he could not use it. The girl was held out over the precipice, between a tree and the maniac, while, were they sure of shooting him without injury to her, the fall would very likely be fatal.

Theodore comprehended this state of affairs, and then rushed to the path which the madman was traversing. Up this he ascended some feet, but the movements of the man above checked him.

Shifting his burden somewhat, that inviolable produced a monstrous pistol, which he carried in some kind of a receptacle at his belt, and aimed it downward at his pursuer.

"Go back, or you'll get hurt!" he cried, with a wild laugh.

Theodore scrambled down and retreated to the side of Green Jacket.

"What can we do?" he asked.

"The gal's insensible, that's plain to be seen," the gunmaker mused. "Consequently she can't help hers-elf any. We must dew somethin', but we'd have to wait till he gets up, and if he *should* lose his footin', or drop the gal?"

It was a terrible sight to behold the giant man, climbing slowly and with evident weariness up that long, precarious ascent, with the form in which those two agonized men felt so great an interest hanging upon his single arm, out over the great cliff.

Would his strength be equal to the task he had undertaken? Could he make that fearful ascent, and never his foot slip or his mad instinct fail? The slightest failure would insure *her* death, his was of little consequence to the anxious watchers.

Up he went, higher and still higher, at every step drawing nearer the summit, but increasing also the danger. Sometimes his limbs seemed to tremble and give way, almost, but as often he laughed and mounted higher.

"Oh, heavens! would he never reach the top? Yes, his strength, mighty as it was, was giving way, and yet the roughest, most uncertain part of the pathway lay before them still. Was there no place where he might dispose of his burden, regain his strength, and prepare for the ascent before him? No; and he still presses on, creeping, kneeling now upon the bare, slippery, horrible rocks.

It seemed to the two men that they could scarcely breathe while this slow scene was passing. How Green Jacket longed to raise his rifle and send a bullet up there to end the wild-man's career! But, there he stood, helpless, spell-bound, unable to do aught to end the seemingly interminable suspense.

Still up he goes, higher and higher, and the dizzy top is almost gained. But how weak the giant is now, and how he trembles! He sways back and forth—he *will* fall, and that fall must be outward!

But no, he can grasp the top of the rock now. He does so, takes another step upward and the great danger is passed. His human prize is thrown senseless upon the ground at the summit, and the maniac stumbled up beside her.

Now again Green Jacket breathes, and makes a move as though to raise his rifle, but remains. A great gasp escapes Theodore, and he turns to his companion, remarking:

"That is something I never expected he'd be able to do."

"Nor I. But now we must go for him. I'd shoot him from here, but my nerves ain't quite steady, and if I hit him ever so fair he might hev strength enough left to pitch her over. We must wait till he gets back a bit from the edge, and then I'll tend to him. Do you look out for her."

"Yes, indeed I will."

The madman gazed down, pitched a single pebble toward the watchers below, gave utterance to one of his blood-curdling laughs, and then again raised his burden.

After one or two feints to pitch her headlong down the cliff, he turned, and in a moment more was gone from sight.

"Now, quick," said Green Jacket, in tones more exciting than Theodore had ever heard him use. "You take the horse, and go after him full speed. Try to get his attention, and keep him busy with you, but I'll be on hand and attend to *him*. Do you look out for her, and see that he don't play devil. Can you ride well?"

"I guess so. Never mind me, I'm used to a horse."

And springing upon the animal the young man quickly urged him out through the narrow pathway, Green Jacket keeping close beside him.

They were not a little disconcerted at finding themselves face to face with Dan Duffey and his companion, who with weapons presented, were evidently masters of the situation!

"Stop," said Dan, who always acted the spokesman. "We don't want to fight you now. We want yer help in getting my wife away from that devil. Will you help us, and we kin settle our differences after that is done. Will you?"

"Who is that crazy devil?"

"No matter! We want your help to get her away. Will you do it?"

"Yes, sir; you can count on me as far as that's concerned, but, be kind enough to recollect, Dan Duffey, that you and I have an account of our own to settle after this job is done! Can ye remember that?"

"I'll not be likely to forget it in a day or two," growled

Dan, pointing to his discolored neck. "You gave me a clock leg, and it's to be paid for; but we've business first."

"All right; what's yer plan?"

CHAPTER VIII.

NOT YET.

"We must surround him."

"Very well, I agree. Now, which of you will ride beyond him, and bring him back?"

"I'll do that," exclaimed Duffey. "Roswins, you get yonder, and keep him from making away toward the river, while Greery here does the same thing on this side. Green Jacket and his chum can arrange their sides."

Not waiting for another word, the two horsemen dashed away through the forest, leaving our two friends quite mystified at the turn affairs had taken.

But there was no time now for speculations, and directing Theodore to ride along the river, and prevent the madman from escaping to the right, while himself scaled the cliff, and kept a look-out for the retreat of the wild man in that direction.

He was barely in time. That personage, finding how vigorously the pursuit of him was to be made, had changed his plan again, and was now dragging the helpless girl rapidly toward the brow of the cliff. Duffey and Roswins, having taken quite a wide circle, but having just observed the movement, started, and both were now riding rapidly toward the spot. But it was too late; they would not be in time, while they dared not fire through the forest, fearing the woman. Green Jacket was not far behind them, and was on foot, so that it was a great question whether and all parties whether he would reach the scene in time to prevent a horrible consummation.

The madman rushed across the level space upon the summit of the elevation with fearful speed, seemingly little impeded by the weight of the still insensible woman. His late

exhaustion was evidently all gone, and an energy and deadly purpose painful to contemplate fired his every movement.

Green Jacket climbed the sharp ascent before him with the ease and rapidity of a cat, keeping his rifle always ready for instant use, but still not daring to venture a shot.

"Stop him! stop him! Shoot him! shoot him!" shouted those behind, who were riding at a rapid, reckless speed through the forest, but still too far away to render any service.

But, Green Jacket only climbed the hill, striving every nerve to reach the brow in advance of the wild man.

He reached the summit of the abrupt ascent, and found himself and the maniac at about equal distances from the point of interest. There was surely hope now, and not only from himself, but the riders had now reached more open ground, and were coming more rapidly.

But a trifling accident changed the whole face of affairs.

As the madman dragged the woman along, her garments caught upon a sharp knot, projecting from a fallen log, and momentarily delayed them. Brief as was the time, it was sufficient to allow Green Jacket to get the advantage in distance, a fact which the maniac noticed in a moment.

Pressing the maiden against him as a shield from the deadly aim of those by whom he was surrounded, the wild abductor again produced that monstrous pistol which he leveled deliberately at Green Jacket. The scout had no cover at hand, and could not fire in return, for he would sooner die than endanger the captive.

There was a flash, that same peculiar report they had once before heard, and the gunmaker fell to the ground where his cap went whirling toward the precipice.

For an instant more the world-like robber lay bent over the prostrate gunmaker, and then, seeing the horsemen closing upon him, suddenly threw the woman upon the ground, rose upright, and, with a wild, fearful laugh, which won the distant echoes, rushed to the brow of the cliff and sprang over, still laughing and shrieking as he descended!

Desperate and horrible as was the act, it received only a momentary attention from those who came upon the scene a moment later.

Roswins stopped beside the prostrate young woman, while

Duffy coolly rode to where Green Jacket was lying. The latter had been struck in the head by the bullet, and his face and clothing, as well as the ground around him, was liberally besprinkled with his blood.

Without dismounting, Dan gazed at the sanguinary spectacle a few moments, until Theodore, who had at first set out rapidly in another direction, reached the spot.

"Poor man," he exclaimed, horrified at the sight, "is he killed?"

"I hope so," growled Dan. "But you've nothin' else to do; suppose you stay here and take keer of him. Maybe ye kin bring him back to life; but I must say that upper story of his don't look very promisin'!"

And with very evident satisfaction at the result, he turned and rode away to where his companion was making efforts to resuscitate the poor girl. The latter, however, was not very successful. The woman still lay a dead weight in his arms, with no signs of returning animation.

"What's the prospect?" he demanded.

"Not very flattering—still by no means serious. The fact is she seemed about half scared to death—I guess no worse—and has made a pretty dead faint of it. But some water will bring her all right. I'll take her down to the river, if you'll get the horses, and see to them."

A wicked smile crossed the face of Dan Duffy.

"Git the horses? I reckon if any horses are wanted I kin git 'em if there's any in the country. Old Green's gone by the board, and I'll manage this other fellow, if he don't attend to his own rest! Maybe I'd better do it anyway."

"Oh no, do not use any unnecessary violence. We are all right now."

"Yes, I understand, but he must attend strictly to *his*, or—"

A significant shake of the head indicated the alternative.

Reynolds raised the form in his arms, and moved down the hill toward the river, taking a course which would bring him to the brink some distance from where the remains of the self-destroyed maniac must be lying. He did not wish to look upon those dreadful features again—why, we shall know in due time.

Thurber was bending over the body of Green Jacket.

Duffey rode his own animal, and leading the one ridden by Roswins, moved to where Thurber had dismounted, and where his horse still stood.

"This is our animal, I s'pose y' know?" he liked. "Now we kalkilate you've used him aboot long enough, and we'll take him. Don't ye open yer head, if ye d—"

The words were grated through the speaker's set teeth, and the flash of a pistol showed very clearly his disposition. Once, even, after he had taken away, he looked back, as though thirsting for an opportunity to shed blood. But if he had any intention of so doing, his better nature for once prevailed, and he rode down to rejoin his companion.

When Roswins reached the river, his daughter had to run to revive somewhat, so that she was gasping for breath, and in a few minutes afterward she was quite conscious. Her first act was to look around timidly, as if fearing that some foul speaker lurked near, and though she recognized the one who held her with a crown, she seemed relieved that some yet more fearful presence was not there.

"Don't fear, Louisa, you'll never see him any more!" Roswins said, with something approaching tenderness.

The woman gave utterance to another groan, and then closed her eyes, as though weary.

"Let me—lie here—and rest!" she gasped faintly.

Placing her carefully upon the ground, Roswins left her thus, while he joined Duffey.

In answer to an inquiring look from the latter, he stated Louisa's condition, and then added:

"We'll wait till she is strong enough to ride, and then push on a few miles, before taking breakfast. This is not a place very congenial to my fancies!" And he cast a suggestive look toward the foot of the cliff.

"I admit that isn't a good place for men of timid nerves," laughed Duffey, "but, we've done a grand day's work here. One of these two I feel is enough for any one day!"

"But are you sure about him?" pointing upward, toward the summit.

"You didn't see him, I guess?"

"No."

"'Cause if you had there wouldn't be any doubt in your

mind, any longer. Ye see he took the ball square in the top of the head—"

"Oh, well!"

"If he ain't dead, and don't die, he may git over it, sometime. But we'll not be troubled any more with him this time. If you hadn't been so weak-nerved I'd 'a' sent his 'prentice with him. Then we should have been sure."

"Oh, no necessity for that. He'll never trouble us."

"I guess not. If I thought he'd ever dare show fight, I'd go back now, and put a veto on it, as they talk about in Congress."

But he felt that no need existed for this movement, and so the twins ate a portion of the food with which they were provided, drank from the river, and returned to where Louisa was still reclining upon the ground.

She was weak, and suffering from the fright experienced on awaking and finding herself in the arms of the men, else she would have attempted flight. Once she had looked into the depths of the river running near her feet, but even if she would be allowed to destroy her own life, she shrunk from the attempt. Possibly all hope might not yet be gone, dark and cheerless as the world still looked to her.

"Come, Louisa," said her father, as he lifted her from the ground, "if you feel better now, so that you can ride, we'll go where we shall find more comfortable quarters, and there we'll rest. What do you say?"

With a weary sigh she leaned against the tree beside which she had been lying, and looked around, up to the brow of the hill where she had narrowly escaped death, though all unconsciously to herself.

"If you're lookin' for help," sneered the desperado, Duffey, "ye can't get yer eyes that trouble. *Your friend* with the big warblers just blew the brains out of *your friend* with the green coat, and then jumped over that ledge. So we'll hev no more trouble from any of them, and you can believe yourself, and come along with us, just as soon as you can. And another thing," he added, very near to her, and hissing the words into her ears, with a fiendishness worthy of his base self alone, "we don't want any more of your foolishness. If there is, ye'll repent, dearly, when repentin' won't dew ye any good."

"Oh, dear, my last friend is gone now," the poor girl moaned, as she realized the fearful story which Dan Dacey had taken so much delight in telling her. "There is no more hope for me in this—"

"Now stop that!" interrupted Dan, with a savage scowl. "I don't want to hear any more such confounded talk as that. You know I'm left to ye always, and what more do ye want?"

"I will tell you," the woman exclaimed, her pallor increased by the intensity of her emotion. "I want to make my own choice of a life companion. And I want for such a station one who is a true man—whose bravery extends beyond the persecution of women, who is not false to his own race, and whose soul can not be bought or sold for a few dollars. That is what *more* I want, and it is a *great deal* more, as you very well know."

A scowl of deadly hatred came over the renegade's features, and again he hissed forth:

"Be keetful, gal, or you'll insult me once too much! I may not stand every thing."

"What will you do? Kill me? I will thank you for that."

"Come, come, son and daughter," said Roswins, with a blank attempt at a smile, "you must not waste time quarreling this way. If Louisa is strong enough for that she can ride a little ways, I feel quite sure. Can you not, Louisa?"

The poor girl had no power to resist, and as she knew the life intended for her to be. She could eat none of the rough food offered her, and so was soon riding away from the spot, with a heavy heart.

The "little ways" could have had no definite meaning, for mile after mile they went on, till it seemed to Louisa that she must fall from her horse, and in fact often she came near doing so.

In vain were her supplications for rest and even death. Little heed was paid to them, and the journey continued until at length she lost all consciousness, and the world in a chaotic mass seemed revolving about her.

Roswins prevented her from falling, and placed her upon the ground, to effect her restoration.

"We shall have to hold on now," he said. "We can't go any farther, comfortably, and perhaps this will do as well as any place. I'll stay here with her while you find a camping-ground."

They were in something of a rough region, but that fact was rather in their favor. A little brook ran not far from the spot, and judging that the spring was not very distant, Duffey set out to find it.

Presently he returned, and announced a fine locality, with abundance of wood, water and game.

And not much later, in a little nook, up among the rocks and giant trees, they had located, with a bough-house neat and attractive save in companionship, prepared for Louisa. Here she was placed, while her companions attended to the horses, and looked for game.

"Tell ye what," said Roswins, confidentially, "we must be very careful of her, and make things as smooth as possible, for it wouldn't work well to have her sick on our hands here."

"See here," retorted Duffey, "I don't want any of your interfering. A trade is a trade, and this matter rests on my han's now. It don't consarn you whether she's sick or not, any longer, does it?"

"Oh, we'd not quarrel," said Roswins, very humbly. "I don't ene dare to meddle with your affairs. I am only helping you along. You know I never meddle with affairs which do not belong to me."

"Oh, you meant well enough, only you have a curious way of showin' it, that's all!" and laughing brutally at some supposed weakness in the words, Dan separated temporarily from his companion.

CHAPTER IX.

NOT DISCOURAGED.

WHEN Theodore heard that strange report from the brow of the cliff, which he recognized as similar to that which had come over the river, creating such an excitement, the previous evening, a deadly chill came over his frame, despite all his efforts to be brave. He wished himself almost anywhere else, but he had thirsted for an adventure, and now realized that he was bound to see it through.

In a moment his alarm changed to anxiety for his friend. Should any thing happen to deprive him of Green Jacket's counsels, he felt how utterly alone he should be among those who now regarded him with a far from friendly feeling.

His alarm did not decrease when he saw his friend lying upon the ground, his head and face bemantled with blood. Reaching the spot, he sprung from his horse, and bent over to ascertain if possible the extent of the injury.

At first he feared that his friend was really killed, but a second look gave him hope. The wound was upon the top of the head, and while the scalp was torn and mangled, and blood had flowed profusely, it was rather probable that the bullet had not penetrated the skull. But with all his hopes, Theodore was unable to satisfy himself that such was really the case.

While he was still trying to satisfy himself on that point, Duffey rode up, and took away his horse, as described in the last chapter. In his anxiety and confusion, the young man scarcely expected any further use for the animal, and so entered no decided protest against the action of Duffey.

Some moments after, chancing to look around, he saw Louisa being borne down toward the river.

"What a fool I am," he mused. "That is just what I ought to be doing. No other treatment will help this man, and it is but a few steps to an abundance of water."

He raised the inanimate form as well as he could and

staggering under the weight, made his way down the hill-side, taking a course to bring him to the river quite a distance from the spot selected by R. swins. He placed Green Jacket upon the bank, close to the trunk, and commenced bathing his head and face, washing away the stains of blood, that he might form an estimate of the nature of the wound the gunmaker had received.

He was encouraged by the appearances, and also by the evidences of returning consciousness. The bullet only seemed to have torn the scalp, just where phrenologists locate the organ of "firmness," and though the wound bled quite freely, it was not necessarily mortal or serious.

Indeed, just at this juncture the wounded man opened his eyes, and with something approaching a groan resumed an upright posture.

"Confound that pecky crazy loon," he exclaimed, in a voice fairly distinct, "he came near settling my business for me. How hot my head feels, and how it aches! Just douse on the water, till my brains get a little clearer, and then I'll tell ye what to do."

There he followed his directions, and in a few moments the wiliness of manner left the gunmaker, and he rose to his feet.

"How much of a hurt is there?" he asked, leaning over so as to obtain a reflection from the water.

He surveyed the wound for a moment, pressed his finger upon the injured portion, and then remarked:

"Well, it is really nothin' after all. But, how the old boy he could miss me as close as that, I don't for the life of me see."

He admitted while his companion bathed and dressed the wound as well as he was able, and when the operation had been completed, he said:

"I'll be out as cool as new. You'd make a real good doctor, you know. Now I'd find an Indian remedy that'll cure it up in a hurry, and then for the trail again!"

There he gazed upon his companion admiringly.

"Then you are not discouraged," he said, "after that narrow escape?"

"Discouraged? Why should I be? If a man's time comes

to die, why he'll die, and thar's no chance about it. You wonder why that felier didn't kill me, but I don't. My time had not come, and so his big ho-s-pistil was of no account."

"Very comforting when one can think so," Tharber thought, but he did not express his thoughts in words.

Green Jacket moved about with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and in a few minutes found a small plant, of which he picked several leaves, and handed them to his companion.

"Now if ye want to do me a sarvice," he explained, "just chew up these here, and fix 'em on that bald place. It works like fun, for I've tried it afore."

"Then this is not your first wound," Theodore observed.

"First! well, I rayther guess not! But that ain't here nor thar, and if you'll 'tend to them leaves just now, I'll be much obliged to ye."

Thus admonished the young man gave the herbs a thorough chewing, although the taste was none of the pleasant, and bound the pulp upon the injured scalp.

"That feels better a'ready," Green Jacket asserted, and Tharber rejoiced as heartily as possible under all the circumstances, that real or fancied, a cure might be speedily effected.

"Now what shall we do?" he asked, as Green Jacket began to gaze around rather anxiously.

He supposed his companion would wish to seek some retired spot, devoting himself to rest, and allow his injury to heal. But the response was quite different.

"You just look around and find my cap and gun," he said. "And then we'll see what those skunks are going to do with that poor girl."

"But you believe in destiny—why look after your gun?" Theodore laughingly asked.

"Yes, I know; but then suppose I meet Dan Tully, and his time had come? What in the old boy would I do without my gun?"

The interlocutor offered no reply, but hastened up the hill, and found the missing articles where they had been deposited at the time of the boat's fall. He looked around for the other party, but saw nothing of them. While returning, however, he heard a sharp crackling, as of dry branches, away through the forest, and looking in that direction beheld a large and

rider disappearing among the trees, whom he had barely time to recognize as Roswins.

"Now whar d'ye suppose the snipes hev gone with the gal, and what are they doin'?" Green Jacket asked, when he had examined his rifle, and satisfied himself that it was ready for service.

Theodore related what he had seen as he descended the hill.

"Yes," growled the gunmaker, "they're off on another trap. It must be most awful hard on the poor gal, but I don't suppose there's any help for it, not at present. There *will* be help, though, when we meet the confounded critters ag'in. But let me think a bit. I do imagine that crazy critter muddled up my trap a trifle."

After musing to himself, and drawing diagrams upon the rock, for some time, the gunmaker summed up the result of his deliberations thus:

"We may as well let 'em go on through the day, if they do well. We must go about the same way in order to reach Thompson's Pass, and that is our best cut. If they go on peacefully we may let them get twenty miles ahead, and all the time they'll be getting us near r to the very place where we want to go. But, we must feller 'em close, and this is the way we'll do it: you can track 'em well enough in broad daylight, right arter they hev gone along. So you go on, and keep 'em almost in sight. If they see you no great matter, for they think I'm knocked out, most likely, and won't pay much attention. I'll keep a ways behind, but near enough so you can signal me in case it's needed, and we can work together if any thing's wrong.

Some farther arrangements were made, signals agreed upon, and the like, after which they again took to the trail. Theodore would have urged delay, that his companion might rest, but Green Jacket would not listen to any such proposal.

"Tain't any thing but a scratch," he said, almost indignantly. "Most likely I shall never think of it ag'in. I shan't if I get an eye on the miserable critters what are abomin' that poor girl so, ye can feel sertain of that. If I feel like givin' out on the way it'll be time enough to stop."

Theodore did not often have any trouble in following the

trail, as the party, deeming themselves rid of all opposition, took no pains to blind their way, and when he was sometimes in doubt, a sign from Green Jacket generally set him right.

But the secret had been what unexpectedly the severity of his wound. His head had been very painful at times, and once or twice he was obliged to stop and rest. But with their encouragements they kept within a certain distance of the travelers, and when they stopped because of some accident no longer, as previously recorded, all their motions were under survey. In a narrow retreat not forty rods from the house, where in which the worn Lorina was resting, and overlooking the spot, Green Jacket and his companion had found a hiding-place.

Dan Daffy passed near the spot in his search for game, and fortunate it was for him that the gunnether was so blinded so severely from the wound upon his head that he was not upon the lookout. But the ranger did not discover his hiding-place, and passed on all the miles of the trail hanging over his head.

Therefore having agreed to watch the camp of the enemy carefully, and awaken Green Jacket promptly at any change of affairs, that individual finally fell asleep, and remained thus for some hours. It was toward evening when he awoke, and after satisfying himself of the fact, he informed Thomas that he felt much better. The pain had almost entirely left his head, and he felt quite himself again.

"Now what is going on over there?" he asked.

There were reported every thing quiet. The winds and the rangers, returning from their hunt with game well laden for all present need, had made some trading arrangements, and left them alone to sleep, in which they still seemed very quiet.

"What is that? Asleep, are they?" continued Green Jacket. "I'm a great mind to go over—but I guess not. There's almost too much light now for what we want to do. Just after dark'll be our time."

But an impregnable conflict was going on in the gunnether's mind, and after a pause of a few minutes, during which he had been reflecting anxiously, he continued:

"It seems to me, though, wold better know about how the land lays, and have every thing ready. We kin do better

than we can to go on any uncertainties. So, now if you'll stay here, and keep shady, I'll go out and see to things in general. Most likely they calculate to move soon as the darkness gets thick enough for their purpose, and if that's the case we want to have our plans all out and done."

Therfore was rather fearful of the propriety of venturing forth upon a scout in full daylight, but he would not oppose his views to those of his companion, so he merely promised to do his part well, trusting that all would issue to their success.

It seemed to the young man that his companion was gone a very long time. It might be that the weary women's gait had an additional length, as they became fraught with suspense, but certainly the sun had sunk so low beyond the western hills that its beams no longer slanted through the forest, and the pale glow of declining day was verging into the misty twilight of the woods, and still Green Jacket had not returned.

Becoming more and more alarmed, as darkness drew on, Therfore had just risen, and crept from the retreat, preparing to go in search of his absent companion, when he heard a stealthy movement, and on turning found himself face to face with THE WILD MAN! The latter seemed to be looking for something, as at the moment of encounter he was peering anxiously into the retreat from which the young man had just emerged. Apparently as much startled as the other at the meeting, he stood motionless for a moment, one hand grasping his large gray beard, the other resting upon the rock beside him.

With the experience of the past all fresh in his memory, Thunder's first movement was toward a pistol, which he even went so far as to produce. But, the wild man raised his head from the rock, with a deprecating gesture, shaking his head slowly, while a world of sorrow seemed beaming from his strange eyes.

It seemed to Therfore as though he were frozen to the earth by that glance, and for a moment he scarcely knew what was passing about him. When he resumed his wonted energy, however, and looked about him, the strange figure was gone, having vanished as utterly and silently as though the earth had swallowed it up.

The young man did not immediately pursue his former purpose, but returned to the nook among the rocks, and leaning against the solid granite, mused upon what had just passed. For the first time since the singular appearance of the maniac, he recollected that he had seen that personage spring from the summit of the cliff, several hours before—taking a leap which according to all human calculation must have produced instant death!

What, then, was this figure which had presented itself to him? He would have scorned any imputation that he was superstitious, but almost insensibly he found himself speculating as to whether the vision which had just appeared to him was not rather of the supernatural order. He recollected the strange expression of those eyes. He had never seen mortal eyes with such a light—and besides it was not possible that this man could now be alive.

He did not, of course, suspect that when the maniac took that fatal leap he struck among the branches of a small tree, which broke his fall, landing him upon the ground with only a few scratches and bruises.

While he was still in the midst of these reflections, Green Jacket stole in, very quietly, and stood beside him.

"Ah, I'm glad to see you," said Thuermer, warmly. "I was just beginning to feel afraid that he had come across you again."

"He! Who is *he*?"

The young man pointed to his companion's scalp.

"He'll not trouble us any more," was the positive reply of the person addressed.

"Don't be too sure of that," returned Thuermer. "He has just been here."

"Here?"

"Yes, here!"

"How? What?"

Green Jacket had no more calmness now. It had all given place to disquiet and unrest. He glanced about from time to time, almost fearfully, while the young man related the story of the singular appearance. When it was finished he said:

"I can't make this crazy man out. It does seem the old

boy is at the bottom of it all. I'd try a rifle-ball on him; but, I declare, if this is him, and he's alive, I don't think any thing of the common nater'll have any effect on him. If it's an apparition"—he glanced quickly around, and spoke in a lower tone—"of course we can't fight the old boy with any fair show!"

There were a few moments' silence, and then Green Jacket resumed:

"I've got every thing laid out nicely. All we've got to do is to go over, and get the gal, which we kin do first rate if they sleep. If they don't, we may have to fight for it. But, in any case, we can do it. Their horses are down by that little run, just below the big rock, so that after we git the gal we can go down there and pick our nags. That's a way of getting to the bush house without waking them."

"Yes, but hark! They are beginning to stir!"

A yawn, followed by an impatient exclamation, came distinctly through the forest.

"Then it is time we were getting over that way."

"You are right."

They emerged from the nook among the rocks, and here Green Jacket stopped to whisper:

"Keep close behind me; I know how to go; and don't make any noise, or we shall spoil it all."

They gave promise of full compliance, and then they glided away, taking a necessarily circuitous route toward the scene of interest.

CHAPTER X..

THE MISSION.

Down the rocky slope, into the hollow where the mountain stream glided and gurgled along, making its way with difficulty between the great masses of stone at one point, and then flowing a few feet smoothly, the two figures crept, pausing to analyze every sound, lest by any incautious movement

they should jeopardize their own safety, and tend to defeat the very object for which they were striving.

"Here's the horses," whispered Green Jacket, after they had crossed the run, and turned up toward a somewhat open glade where the animals had been secured. "You see how they are, if any thing should happen that you want to come after 'em."

Theodore bowed assent, for he did not wish to trust his lips even in a whisper, and then they moved away up the opposite ascent, here and there stopping to listen and take breath, until they were some distance above the point they wished to reach. Thence they glided down, creeping between, over, and around large rocks, until at last, passing through between two great ledges, the scene of interest was before them.

All was wrapped in complete darkness, save such feeble light as the stars gave down through the long covering of the forest, yet the spies were able to distinguish the spot where Duffey and his companion were lying, and the dark hut of boughs which contained the object of their search.

But just as they reached the spot, a sound proceeded from the hut, and presently a figure walked down toward the place where the two men had been sleeping. It was Roswins, as they judged from his form and general bearing.

"Come, Dan," he said, "if you are going on, it is time you were up, and getting ready for business. It's dark as a pocket."

"Then I ain't goin'," growled the not very amiable outlaw.
"The gal's all right, ain't she?"

"She is here, and I think asleep," was the reply.

"Then go to sleep yourself. I'll get up when I get round and ready—not a minute afore."

Roswins paced back and forth a few minutes in silence, and seeing that Duffey had not appeared again to sleep again, finally concluded to follow his example. But he evidently did not rest easy, for he at times gave expression to his feelings in mutterings, which if at all heard short range did not reach the ears of the listeners.

The other recumbent seemed disturbed. Once or twice he made an uneasy motion, and then, rising upon one elbow, he

exclaimed, prefacing the remark with a horrible volley of oaths.

"See here, Roswins; if you lie down and *shut up*, all right. If you don't I'll break your miserable head for you! Now do you understand?"

Of course Roswins understood, and a silence ensued so deep as to be almost painful. It was broken at length by the irregular snoring of one sleeper, and when this sound was heard, Green Jacket pressed his companion's arm, whispering in very low tones:

"Now I'm goin' in to get the lady out. Do you stay here till I come with her. If either of these hounds wake up, and there's any need for it, *shoot*, and don't be afraid to dew it! Do you understand?"

"I do."

"Will ye do it?"

"I will."

"Then all right. Keep yer eyes open now, and don't let any thing go wrong."

Gliding in very stealthily, and repeating like movements until he reached the lough cabin, Green Jacket stooped and glided in.

Uttering a signal of caution scarcely above his breath, he waited a moment, and then began to search for the occupant. But he did not at once discover any person present, and, pausing in his search, he very gently whispered:

"Where are you?"

No response came, and after listening intently for some time, Green Jacket repeated his inquiry.

Still the same dead silence.

"She's sound asleep," he mused, "and no wonder, when she must be quite worn out with riding back and forth, and every kind of chase. Poor girl! She has endured enough since she came to my cabin at first, to kill any ordinary woman."

He proceeded slowly around the narrow limit, feeling his way, and carefully examining with his hands every foot of the surface, but when he reached the point from which he started forth, he was quite astonished at finding that the hut was perfectly empty.

He paused, bent down and listened, uncertain what course to pursue. He could not imagine what had become of the late occupant.

While standing thus in doubt he became aware that some person was approaching. He had hardly heard the approach, but long cultivated sense informed him in some mysterious manner that a visitor was drawing nigh.

He placed himself near the entrance, grasping a weapon in case of need, though the probabilities seemed that it must be the occupant of the place.

Presently the stars which were to be seen here and there through the entrance were shut out, and looking up, the dim darkness of the place was just sufficient to reveal to Green Jacket the great gray beard, the huge, stooping form of the nameless madman!

If the dead risen from the grave he could scarcely have been more disconcerted. With all his bravery, the greenlander had a dreadful horror of this very being, though in way it was so he could not well have informed any one. He could have pointed his knife to the intruder's heart, or have rushed upon and overthrown him with perfect ease; and had the intruder been any other person, he would most likely have pursued one of the two courses. As it was he only shrank back while the madman crept into the narrow confines.

It was too late now to escape. Even while he was trying to devise some plan, the madman grasped him, and on finding that it was not the woman he expected to encounter, began a fierce struggle. This, of course, in such narrow confines, was brief. The combatants swayed against the frail structure, and it went down with a crash.

The noise awoke Duffy and Rowing, both of whom sprang up with exclamations of alarm, and rushed toward the spot.

They stopped at once, however, when, struggling from the ruins, came the madman whom they supposed dead, and with one of his peculiar laughs began to dance over his victims. The effect upon them was no less marked than it had been upon Green Jacket and his young friend.

Without waiting to accept the offer of battle given them, the twain retreated in mad haste from the spot. The cause of this alarm, forgetting his old foe in the new, followed at a rate of

speed very little inferior to their own, and a race ensued, which if it could have been witnessed would have furnished a rare theme for the pencil of an artist, or the pen of a tragic delineator.

In consequence of this new phase of affairs, Green Jacket found himself free again to pursue the business of his own wild nature. His first work was to extricate himself from the troubles which had fallen upon him, and then, getting the furs which his senses had not fully supplied, he crept down to where he had left Theodore.

That person had been waiting patiently for the reappearance of his comrade, and was not a little startled and disconcerted at the sudden crash which had awakened the sleeper. Acting upon the instructions of his absent companion, he was upon the point of firing at the two men who started toward the scene, when the strange laugh of the maniac deprived him of all power of movement for the time. When he had recovered the use of his nerves the two were dashing wildly through the forest.

But a few moments later came the gunmaker, full of conflicting emotions. He grasped Theodore by the arm, and when they were a little removed from the late camp, now perfectly deserted, he said:

"She's gone!"

"Where has she gone?"

"That's none of my business. It can't be that man who killed or carried her off, for I am sure he hadn't been there before. And only a few minutes ago they said she was there. But it doesn't make any difference, she's gone now."

"Perhaps she's undertaken an escape on her own account," suggested Theodore.

The other jumped at the suggestion.

"It may be," he said. "We'll go down to the horses, and see if any of them is gone."

"I thought I heard some movement down there, just a few moments before we came, but I may have been mistaken," Thurber whispered.

Not being obliged to move with so much caution as before, they were but a few moments in reaching the place where the horses were picketed. Darby and his companion seemed to

have forgotten or ignored the animals, as they had gone in quite an opposite direction. Still one of the horses was missing!

"What did I tell you?" demanded the clerk Theodore. "I tell you that woman is worth her weight in gold. She's full of spirit, or she never would undertake any such movement as that!"

"We're not sure it was the gal," said Green Jacket, cautiously.

"But it must have been. Who else would have taken away a single horse? Only I don't see how we are going to tell which way she went."

"Then you don't understand that?"

"No. Do you?"

"I do."

"How?"

"Get onto that horse, and we'll see."

Theodore did as directed, and when Green Jacket was mounted he said:

"Give your horse his head, and see which way he goes?"

"Are you sure he'll go right?"

"I'd like to hev ye git those horses any other way than what the fust one went, unless ye was told 'em. Now see!"

They did see, as the horses at once set off toward the east, picking their way with freedom, and evincing no hesitation or uncertainty.

"The very course I told of," said the Indian. "Now, if the gal hasn't got too far away, and I don't miss the wrong track, it all looks plain to my green nose. Let us only give 'em the slip this time, and I don't think they'll catch us ag'in."

"But we're not sure of getting off now."

"I know it. But if we can get five miles start we are all right."

The way was not the most pleasant which might have been selected, but pleasure had been considered; but they made the best of it, and after traveling a time passed to be seen.

"Don't you hear that?" asked the Indian, quickly.

Yes, they could plainly hear the movements of a horse through the soft soil in front of them, and under the circum-

stances, they had no doubt but they were near the object of their search.

"I suppose the poor gal will feel scared when she finds we are after her," said Green Jacket, "and thinks it's the other chaps. But no, we are friends, and she'll find it out in due time. Maybe it would do to speak and tell her."

"Why not? It can't do any great harm."

"Lally?" said the leader, raising his voice somewhat.

The horse in advance was evidently checked, as the sound of footfalls ceased.

"Lally, friends!" was repeated, and then the two moved forward.

Theodore was the first to discover the fugitive, sitting her horse beside the route they were taking, and almost fearing that her ears had deceived her, or that the word was only used as a mockery. With a cry of joy she grasped the young man's hand and pressed it within her own, unable to express her emotion in words.

"So-lo, here's the gal!" exclaimed Green Jacket, reining in his horse. "You see we've found you ag'in. Do you want to go with us, or have us go with you? I s'pose ye do, unless there's some change come over yer heart's since we parted so unceremonious like."

"Oh, yes, indeed," was the faint answer. "I want to go with you to escape from these dreadful scenes, or die! Sometimes I little care which. I was wishing but now that I was back again to that evil, so that I might cast myself over, and be freed from this terrible, terrible ordeal."

"No, no, now, poor girl," said the scout, drawing his hand mysteriously across his face. "Don't fret that way any more. Across this hill and I are with ye now, and these bloody brutes never shall catch us napping again till we bring ye back in safety to your friends."

"A'ns, sir, you know not what you promise! I have no friends!"

"No friends! Then what do you want to go?"

"Anywhere, sir, anywhere, so it be among civilized people. I will throw myself upon the protection of all honorable people, and pray that this persecution may cease!"

After a momentary silence, she continued:

"I must tell you my story soon, when we have more time. But it is a sad one, and I shrink from going over the recital when not necessary."

"Never mind it now; never mind it," said Green Jacket, hurriedly. "We want first to get you away from these heathens, whoever they may be, and then we can talk. Come, you're terribly tired out, but if you can ride, we must get along a ways toward Thompson's Pass."

"Oh, no, indeed I don't feel tired now. Or rather, I feel so much encouraged that I can do any thing to get away from this—place."

"When we get beyond this pass, I think we shall be safer," the leader returned. "And it can't be more than twenty or twenty-five miles away. So, Theodore, boy, if you'll see to her, an' look out for any bad signs, I'll try to pick the way."

A task in every way so agreeable to the young man's feelings had not for many a day been delegated to him, and he obeyed the suggestion with remarkably good grace.

He had longed to be beside that strange, persecuted woman, to learn more of her sad history, if he might, or at least to listen to her voice, and to express, when he found the ability to do so, his sympathy with her.

And as they moved slowly on in the darkness, through a wild, obstructed region, he had the opportunity so long coveted. Brief and hesitating were the first few sentences which passed between them, but, finally, the gates were opened, and they came to speak with confidence and mutual pleasure of such topics as presented themselves, until they were a little startled by the abrupt halt of their leader.

CHAPTER XI.

"AGAIN!"

"Ain't ye tired?" he asked, addressing himself to Louisa.

The woman would have replied that she was not, but in truth she could not make the statement. It seemed as though she could scarcely sit in the saddle from minute to minute, and so she replied, with a smile:

"Yes, indeed, I feel very tired, but I do not mind that, so that we may leave *them* far behind."

"I think we'd better mind it," he said. "I've got another reason for it, and putting them both together seems plain enough to me that we'd better take a rest not far from here."

"What is your reason?" Theodore inquired.

"Well, the lady, here, is tired, and needs rest; that is one of 'em," was the rather hesitating reply of the scout. "And then, if we go on, it's goin' to be rayther slow, difficult work. It's so confounded dark, and goin' to stern. Then I ain't acquainted with the land first best, and don't know how we'd better steer to hit Thompson's Pass."

"You do not mean to say that we are lost?" Theodore asked, in much excitement.

"Oh, no, nothin' of that sort. I know where we are well enough, but it's a kind of blind way from here to the Pass, and we can make it a great deal quicker in daylight. We are goin' to have a storm, plain enough, and to try to go on will be all foolishness, in my mind. We're far enough away now so the old boy himself couldn't find us in this darkness, and in the morning we kin make the distance afore they kin lose us out, even if they undertake. Now what say? Hadn't we better stop here, find a sheltered place, and rest ourselves and the hosses till daylight?"

"Do as you think best," answered Thunder. "We leave it all to your judgment."

"Then I shall stop. Here's a ledge, and just possibly we kin find a place where the storm won't reach us. If you'll wait here a few minutes I'll go and see."

Green Jacket dismounted, and his companions followed suit. The young man busied himself with halting the horses a little aside and carefully securing them to the trees, while Loon seated herself upon the ground, weary and exhausted beyond measure. Meantime the latter set himself about exploring the rugged ledge, which with numerous breaks and ramifications extended much farther than the senses could comprehend in that appalling blackness.

But Green Jacket seemed to find what he wanted, for in a few minutes his voice came down from an elevation not far distant.

"Come up here!"

Theodore came up, took his companion by the hand, and they moved in the direction whence the sound came. But they made very little progress, as the black rock met them on all sides.

"A singular place this!" Theodore exclaimed. "I do not wonder he did not wish to go farther. But some one will have to help me, for I am completely puzzled by this labyrinth."

Green Jacket came to their assistance, and in a short time they had gained the retreat. It was reached by a winding shelf, running up and around the face of one portion of the ledge, overhung by another projecting rock of enormous proportion, beneath which was a perfectly sheltered recess sufficiently large to contain a dozen persons. In some portions a sort of moss had gathered about the rough boulders which were scattered here and there, so that the place seemed far from uncomfortable, even though it was only composed of the solid rock.

"There, this is what I call comfortable," said Green Jacket. "It may storm all day long, and we are dry and cozy here. If anybody wants to make our acquaintance, and you are disposed to say 'no,' we him say it to mean nothing!"

It was a delightfully secure place, and only one drawback presented. There was only the bare rock to lie upon, and it would be cruel for Loon, wearied as she was, to rest upon a couch.

"Yer right, my boy," said Green Jacket to Theodore, who first mentioned the fact. "I was thinking of that very thing, and I don't

see but one way to remedy it. If we had blankets or dry leaves, or grass, or something of that kind, we might fix up in grand shape. But we haven't got 'em, and they can't be got. There's one thing we can get, and that is boughs—they don't make a real fire, but they are better than nothing, and we kin get a good mass, and fix up things in the best shape possible."

"Just so. I will go with you for some," said Theodore, as his companion was about moving away.

"No, I'll go, and I can get enough in a short time. I'd rather you stay here. I suppose it's all set, but something doesn't seem just right to me now. If you are here I shall feel right about it."

Already the low rumble of distant thunder could be heard, away in the west, and at times the distant flashes of lightning gave a momentary pallor to the darkness; but it was still too distant to afford any real light to the recess upon the ledge.

Green Jacket was not absent very long, ere he returned with quite an armful of boughs, which he proceeded to arrange in the remotest corner of the niche.

Louisa was quite surprised at this unlooked-for preparation, and protested against so much pains being taken in her behalf, but the gunmaker only laughed in his quiet manner, and assured her that it would be as much a protection to their consciences as to her body; and with the words he was scrambling down the ledge again.

"What a kind, brave man he is," the gratified Louisa remarked, as his footsteps faded away. "And after all, how much a mystery!"

She spoke the last words in a lower tone of voice, as though to herself, and started perceptibly when her companion remarked:

"He is not the only mystery over which we may surmise, and puzzle our brains. I know of others."

"Yes, indeed," remarked Louisa, when she had recovered somewhat from her momentary enchantment. "I know a certain young man, evidently not deeply versed in woodcraft, who is a mystery to—to his companions."

"As well as a young lady who does not introduce herself," retorted Theodore.

"You would scarcely expect a young lady with two traveling companions who withheld *their* confidence, to make herself too freely known. You have heard me claimed by Dan Deely as his wife. *That* I denied. You have heard me claimed by this man, Roswins, as his daughter."

"Which I have *not* heard denied."

"This claim I have had no opportunity to deny. But that is neither admitting or denying it. You know already more of me—"

She paused suddenly, as though embarrassed, and Theodore completed the sentence.

"More than this, for I know that you have no home, no real friends on earth, save those who are with you now. Am I not right there?"

"So I suppose."

"Then I can say, here and now, what I must say sooner or later. I have a home—or what would be a home, if it had the spirit of such. That spirit is wanting now, but you shall go there, and it will wait no longer."

"I go to your home?" the woman almost shrieked, starting to her feet. "You can not know—no, you do not know what you are saying!"

It was Theodore's turn to be astonished now. He had not for an instant premeditated his last words—in fact they had come forth without any volition upon his part, and now that such had been the result, he was quite uncertain whether he had made a fatal mistake, or simply a contemptible blunder.

"What do you mean?" he asked, the words coming dryly from his mouth.

"What do *you* mean?"

"I mean that if you are not the wife of Dan Deely, I would make you mine!"

"Then, indeed, you do not know of what you speak!"

And with a convulsed air she turned away, leaving behind her the wall of rock.

Theodore walked out to the front of the house, hesitated a moment whether to throw himself off, and then, thinking better of the matter, walked back to where he had left Louisa.

"Our friend is coming," he said, assuming as indifferent a tone as possible. "I heard him moving, I tracked."

"Say nothing to him of this," Louisa remarked, turning toward her companion.

But moments passed, and no Green Jacket made his appearance.

"Possibly I was mistaken," Theodore exclaimed, listening, "but I certainly fancied I heard him moving up—"

The storm had been coming nearer all this time, and now the flashes of light were brilliant enough to reveal something of the surroundings of the place. One came at this moment, and there, not six feet away from them, both distinctly beheld the tall, gaunt form, floating hair and massive beard of the madman.

Louisa shrieked forth: "Oh, God! again!" and sunk upon the rock.

The same flash of light revealed both parties to the other, and with a bound the maniac sprung upon Theodore.

The young man was crushed down in a moment, and though he struggled valiantly, his strength was as nothing, opposed to the insane fury which the maniac brought to bear upon him. This time there could be no possibility of mistake. The assault was of a deadly character, for the madman had grasped his neck with both hands, and it seemed as though his desperate clutch would rend the bones and fragments asunder. Any defense which he would make must be made quickly.

The movement for a weapon was rather instinctive than otherwise, on the young man's part, and by chance he first encountered his knife-belt. It was immediately drawn forth, and though there was no light to guide his hand, he struck out, once, twice, thrice, and each time the blade encountered something. Then he was conscious of a great effort of strength on the part of the giant, it seemed for a moment as though the rocks had fallen over and crushed him, and then all became a dark void, from which sense and power had fled, and only a dim realization of existence remained, no dim and vague, to be even a certain evidence of reality.

Green Jacket came stumbling up the ascent with an armful of boughs, and made his groping way into the retreat. The unusual stillness somewhat surprised him, and possibly he felt a trifle vexed, at the same time.

"Where are you?" he demanded. "It is me, old Green Jacket; yo needn't be afeard."

But no response was made. The unwonted stillness seemed filled with danger. He moved a pace or two, and then paused again, muttering to himself:

"I wonder what in the old log is up now! Sall's old's right, somewhar."

A luridly lightning-flash came at the moment, revealing every object in the retreat visible for one brief instant, and then fading out into profound blackness.

But that moment of light had been long enough to show Green Jacket a bloody form lying close to his feet, and all else vacant. In a moment he was bending over the form, and had satisfied himself that it was *The One*.

He started to his feet, his mind fixed with a fierce determination.

"It is none of that crazy critter's work," he muttered. "He can't be far away, and I'm going to find him. Let me once come across him ag'in, and there'll be one less warbler in these woods—either him or me, that's a positive fact."

He went to the rear of the place, and deposited his basket, buckled his belt with a decided purpose, and then moved out again upon the shelf. Confident that the noise would not passed him, he felt his way up along the incline, and at length he stood upon the open ground above. From this point, of course, he had no longer the slightest chance of the oft-recurring flashes of light momentarily presenting the scene before him. But he pushed on in the direction which his judgment decided must stand the greatest chance of being correct, looking and listening, and reviving himself for the expected conflict.

He had gone but a little way when something very like a groan reached his ears. He stopped, listening intently for a moment, and keeping his eyes fixed in the direction whence the sound seemed to proceed.

He was not obliged to wait long, and presently a portion of the second course on the heavy rim, a flash of light, just brief and flickering enough to show some human forms, a little distance to the right, gave him positive assurance that he was not mistaken.

But he had distinguished no details, and holding his rifle ready for instant use, he stole forward, looking with no small anxiety for further revelations.

The next flash seemed a long time in coming, but at length its red glow blazed among the trees, and filled the forest, so that Green Jacket had no difficulty in comprehending the condition of affairs before him.

Close at hand stood the maiden, Louisa, trembling and leaning against a tree for support, while at a little distance lay the man, groaning and quivering, in the throes of mortal agony. Of course this was a state of affairs very unexpected for, but it was no time to stop and wonder.

"God, it is I!" he exclaimed, that she might not be too severely frightened, and sprang to her side.

She uttered one glad cry of surprise, and bowed her head upon his broad breast, trembling, weak, and almost fainting from the intensity of her emotions.

But in a few moments she recovered somewhat, and raising her head, said, in uncertain tones:

"Oh, what a horrible, dreadful scene!"

"What is the meaning of all this?" Green Jacket inquired.

"I can not tell you. This man is dying, I think, and I fear the other is killed. What can we do? I can not tell."

"Wait here a moment, and let me see how it fares with this man. Then we'll go back and attend to the other."

He bent over the man, just as a flash of lightning revealed the fates, and it needed no second look to assure him that death had set its seal there. The man's breath came hard, and his eyes were almost fixed, but he managed to utter a few words, so that the other distinguished the words:

"Don't kill me — I'll be — Jerry Noles — go unpunished!"

They were the man's last words, borne almost on his last breath.

A few more moments came, slowly and painfully, the groans growing longer, then a painful gasp — a struggle, and the life went out from that shrinking frame, out into that great unknown, upon whose shores mortals stand ever, pausing, wondering, dreading, yet catching no whisper, no message, no knowledge from those realms beyond the river.

CHAPTER XII.

FROM THE PAST.

GREEN JACKET did not feel as he had expected when he realized that the madman was dead. He had felt a strange fear of the man when living, and now he felt quite as singular sensations regarding his death. Those last words—"Don't let Jerry Nobles go unpunished," seemed ringing in his ears still. But he regained his feet, and hastened to the place where he had left Louisa.

"Come," he said, "we can do nothing more for him; let us go back and see to Theodore."

No words passed, as he led the fair adventuress along, until they had nearly reached the lodge, when he asked, a moment abruptly:

"Who is Jerry Nobles?"

"Jerry Nobles! Why do you ask that?" was the startled exclamation.

Green Jacket hesitated a moment, and then returned:

"Because, that strange man, when drawing his last breath, said: 'Don't let Jerry Nobles go unpunished!' And I wanted to know who he meant."

"I will tell you, presently," she said. "But hark! there comes the storm."

The first great drops of rain came down through the treetops with a force like that of bullets, and the storm proved to be one of great fury. But fortunately they were not far from shelter, and just as the drops came down in profusion they reached the retreat from which Louisa had been hurled only a few minutes previously, under threat of death if she uttered a cry.

It was sweet, even if sad, to realize that this terror never could overshadow her life more.

A moan which came to their ears as they entered gave assurance that Theodore still lived, and on making an examination it was found that he was coming back again to consciousness. The madman, feeling the keen thrusts of the knife,

had dashed him against the rock with dreadful fury, but the moss covering and Thaurber's nearness, had saved him from fatal injury.

After a few minutes' attention from the gunmaker, Theodore was able to sit up, and then the news was communicated to him that Louisa was safe, and that her dangers from one source were at an end.

"Then she's only two more enemies," said the young man.

"That's all, and thank goodness I ain't afraid to measure weapons with them any minute. I don't think I was afraid of this feller, but there was somethin' about him I did not particularly fancy."

Hearing the sound of Theodore's voice, Louisa came forward to express her gratification that he had escaped with so slight an injury.

"I feel a great interest in that," she said, "for it was in my defense you were injured. I can only express my sympathy, for I can never repay you otherwise."

Did she realize how much those words meant to the young man?

He turned away, with more emotion than he would have cared to exhibit. But the darkness favored him, and in a moment he was calm again.

The storm was now raging in all its fury. The very flood-gates seemed unloosed, and the rain descended in torrents, while the loud thunder filled the air with its almost constant reverberations. Miniature rivers went leaping down around the rocks in all directions, and in the valley below quite a creek seemed surging along.

But where our adventurers sat all was sheltered—not a rain-drop falling or gust of wind reaching.

"I am sorry for our poor horses," said Theodore. "They have had a severe time, and this storm must seem most unpleasant to them."

"Yes, it's bad," Green Jacket returned, "but we've no help for it, and they ain't human bein's, after all."

Then noticing that Louisa was sitting close beside them, gazing out at the mad play of the elements he said:

"Hain't ye better go yonder and lie down? Maybe ye kin sleep a bit, or rest better than ye can here."

"No, no," she returned, quickly, "I cannot rest now, or sleep. Too many old memories are busy. Some I had tried to forget forever are coming up to my mind now, and perchance it would be a good time to relate my life-story if you wish to know it. No doubt you have wondered much concerning it, and indeed, but for the events of this night I should never have revealed what I purpose now to tell you."

Of course the listeners were all attention and interest for the commencement of the narration. Green Jacket placed both elbows upon his knees, resting his chin in the open palms, while Theodore, forgetting even his aching head, found a seat upon the opposite side of the speaker, and gave his undivided attention to the recital which followed.

"Ten years ago," she commenced, "I was not what you see me to-day, but a lively, careless girl, just coming to the estate and understanding of womanhood. I lived with my father, my mother having died some years before, and I, being his only child, naturally came in for all the indulgence which it would be possible for any one in my position to have. We lived in one of the south-eastern cities, and my father, by frugally managing a not very extensive business, gave me a good education—just finished, as the phrase goes, at the time of which I am speaking. He had also placed a few thousand dollars in the bank; all for me, as he had no other object or purpose in life. His name, I should have mentioned, was **William Noble**.

"Very naturally, I suppose, I was not free from suitors, even at that early age. I had received my education in love several times already, but finally my heart was given truly, to a man many years older by many years, named Alfred Ross. But the disparity in our ages was nothing to me. I was a blossoming girl, he a hale, vigorous man, just in the full bloom of his manhood. We were betrothed, though not formally, to express notice of our intention to wed having been given to my father. But I had every reason to suppose that he would approve my choice.

"But he did not live to do so. One day a gun in the hands of other parties accidentally exploded, wounding him, and he was brought home to die. Before he died, he had, however, recommended me to the care of his brother, the only near re-

tive than my own. This brother, Jerry Nobles, was present, and expressing some fear that he should not be able to care for me as well as though I were his own daughter, my father exacted a father's solemn promise from me that I would obey him in all things, as though I were really his child. I was too young and inexperienced then to know how this promise might bind me to an respected man, but I was contented soon to learn. Every thing my father had was placed in the hands of Jerry Nobles, to be kept and guarded for me, when I should need it, and with the protestations of unyielding fidelity the charge was accepted. I wondered even then at this complete devotion of my father to this brother, for he had generally the name of a paper boy, good for nothing man. He had been married to an amiable, good woman, but could not live happily with her, and so a separation had been the result. Much of his aving had been gained by cheating, in which honesty did not always play a prominent part. And yet this man had always been the favorite of my father—a man radically different in character, who had even furnished him money from time to time, when his usual sources of revenue failed. And to that man was I given, with all my worldly interests, with no other friend to counsel or assist me.

"I was not long in learning that life had changed to me. I saw no more of its pleasures. One of the first acts of my new father, for so I was taught to call him, much as I disliked to do so, was to forbid Alfred Rose from seeing me, as he argued that I was too young to think of love affairs, and insisting that my father had privately discountenanced our growing intimacy. In vain I urged our betrothment. He would listen to nothing, and refused Alfred admittance to the house or grounds. But Alfred came, and to his sorrow.

"One evening we had a party dinner, and walked to the gate. Here we stood talking and wondering of the day, when Jerry Nobles stole upon us, and dealt Alfred several heavy blows upon the head, nearly killing him, and inflicting injuries which made him a confirmed lunatic!"

"The old boy! You don't mean to say—" interrupted

Green Jacket, but checking himself, he added, "Pardon me, I didn't mean to break in that way."

"But you asked a question, and I can answer it. That wretched man who died to night, was the man I loved so devotedly years since. But I must explain."

Her voice trembled, and she hesitated for some moments before proceeding.

"When it was feared that Alfred would die, my uncle left the place, taking with him all my father's ready money, and was gone some time. When it was safe to do so he came back, and proceeded to clear up the business, converting it into money. Then we left the place, professedly to visit some of my school friends, but never stopping there, keeping on far away into the wild West. I scarcely could tell what became of me, now, for all my hopes of life were blasted. We stopped at length, and Jerry Nash resumed his dissipated habits, using for the purpose of playing the role of a gentleman, the money he should have securely kept for me."

"So several years passed sadly, as you may suppose, and then we were startled by the appearance of a bandit in our village, for we were then stopping in a small settlement in Ohio. This was none other than Alrick, who had tracked out our course, by what means I have no idea, and who finally succeeded in wreaking vengeance upon Jerry at the first meeting."

"That was but the beginning of a series of misfortunes. We left that vicinity at once, settling elsewhere, only to be tracked out, and exposed to fresh dangers. I can not detail all these, and you would not care to hear them. But I seemed to have now two purposes, one to kill Jerry, and the other to abduct myself. What horrors I have suffered from that time to the present you may imagine, but not realize. Thank God, they are over in ~~one~~ direction, though I could now weep for a life that was once so dear to me?"

Again she paused, and it was some minutes before she resumed. But at length she went on:

"In a short time, my father, as I now called him, was ~~lost~~ lost again, having spent all in moving about the country to evade this mad avenger. It was about this time that I met Dan Daffey, and some arrangement (its nature I never know)

was made between them, by which Jerry came into possession of more money. They were together much, and as it seemed that we were now rid of the crazy man, things went very well.

"But just then I was startled by a proposition more dreadful than I can describe—that I become the wife of Dan Daffey. I knew now enough of the man to esteem him in my eyes, but all my arguments were of no avail, and I finally declared I never would, even in the face of death, say the words that should make me his. But this I was coolly informed would make no difference. He was going to his Western friend—Indians, he meant—and they never inquired whether a ceremony had been said or not. I would have fled, but there was no opportunity. I was not even allowed to speak with any person to whom I could breathe of what was threatening me, and one night we left our home, to commence **this strange journey.**

"At the settlement near your cabin," addressing herself particularly to Green Jacket, "my uncle left us, and Dan, supposing I was now wholly in his power, undertook to conduct me alone. I had resolved to appeal to anybody who would give me help, and when I saw your cabin, some words which I had heard in regard to your singularity of character, led me to suppose that you would assist me. And I found that I did not appeal in vain, varying as have been the strange fortunes which have resulted thus far."

"No, you didn't, gal, and if you want to put yourself under our protection for a further time, you shall have it. I'd like to see any such sneaks as them could handle Green Jacket. If Dan Daffey don't keep away I'll shoot him, as I would a snake, and as for this uncle, I'd better go and make up the money of yours he's squandered. So make yourself perfectly at ease; we're safe here, our powder's dry, and nothin' shall molest ye."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks," the fair one murmured, and then added:

"I can only repay you in thanks, for I am no better than a beggar, besides; but my heart is full of gratitude, and I comprehend the greatness of all these favors you are bestowing upon me."

"Don't talk of that, don't talk of it," said Green Jacket, as though something dire was in his throat. "We only do what we order, and the old boy told a man that would do as much. Therefore, my boy, I want to slip down and see to the horses a moment, for they are our principal step. I must be gone long. Face your pistol if my team's wrong."

The storm had principally gone past, and the shower of rain which a short time before deluged the earth, was now falling down to scattering drops. But the darkness was more the less profound, and now it was enlivened by flashes of electric light. The wind, too, swept dismally among the trees, and the general aspect of all this was greatly ominous. To Theodore it seemed especially so, as he reflected upon the stormings, but yet a gleam of hope, like a star behind the dark night-clouds, would at times flash forth.

Regarding the present as a favorable moment, he resolved to make one more appeal to the adherent of the other party.

"Louisa," he said, gently, "may I not hope that you have reconsidered those words which you spoke just before—before he came?"

"Why do you ask me that?"

"Because, when Jerry Nelson comes for you, if ever he should come again, I could tell him that you were my promised wife, and then I should be justified in defending you to the last extremity."

"But, consider how hasty you are. Your passion might soon cool, and then my life would be only another record of misfortune. You have only known me here, and you sympathize with me, but *love* is quite a different thing. Do not be hasty."

"Believe me, I am not hasty. I know myself from love, and I know that our future can be all happiness, if you will give me the power to make it so."

"It may be as you wish, then, should he be doubtful, while that man lived I could never place myself to another. It would have cost his life, as well as my own."

Theodore shuddered, when he recollected that it was his own arm, though nerveless in self-defense, which had given the fatal blow; but he felt no guilt, only a profound sorrow, not mingled with horror.

"Louisa, my own," he said, "let us hope that now your troubles have ended forever. At the first opportunity we shall be made so wholly well that no power, however desperate, can molest you again. Now lie down, and try to rest, for we have not yet reached the land of safety."

There was a greeting of pure and holy affection, and then they parted, just as Green Jacket came up and announced "all right."

CHAPTER XIII.

AND LAST.

For two or three hours all was quiet, and the trio in the niche gave themselves up to rest, feeling that no danger could threaten them before the coming of morning light.

But with the earliest beams Green Jacket was astir. He awoke Theodore, and after learning that no serious effects were likely to result from the young man's injury of the night previous, departed to see that the horses were in condition to continue the journey.

The poor animals seemed quite lethargy after their night's crouching, but not otherwise complaining, and having satisfied himself upon this point, the scout returned to his companions.

He found that Louisa had arisen, and although still suffering from the fatigue and excitement of the events through which she had passed during the last few days, she seemed in good spirits, and welcomed the scout with a pleasant "good morning."

"Good you're here now," Green Jacket said, without making any more, "because there's something I want to have you see. The road is very good. The horses are all right, only a little lagging, and I suppose we will find a way. But, we must go on a ways before we stop to eat, or make down a trail, as we like here, before we start. It's for you to say what."

"My preference," Louisa said, "would be to go on as far as possible, before we stop for anything. Hunger will not seriously interfere with our journey, and delay may do so."

"That's as true as preachin'," remarked the first speaker.

"and it's jost my mind. So while you folks are gettin' ready I'll go down and look after the nags."

He started out toward the edge of the cliff, but retreated quite precipitately. The cause of this movement was a bullet which passed very close to his cheek, almost grazing the skin in its course, struck against the rock beyond, and fell, a flattened, harmless mass, at the foot of Lorian.

The hollow report of a musket came at the same moment, and a curl of smoke floated away from the branches of a heavy-topped tree, some seventy-five yards distant.

"What does that mean?" the young man asked.

"It means *bezars*, if nothin' else," returned the gunner. "If it's what I suspect, Duffey has run across some of the eds, and got 'em to help him. But no great matter, we're proof against the cusses, I think. They can't well get here, and we can get away as soon as it comes dark again."

Some time passed before any farther demonstration took place. No appearances of any foe lurking in the vicinity were to be seen, and Theodore finally became impatient to venture forth, and ascertain positively. But Green Jacket would listen to no proposition of the kind.

"Wait awhile," he said, "and if all remains quiet, I'll go, and see what the prospect is. But, because the red devils are still is no reason that they ain't *koz*. I've had some with 'em, and know suthin' how they conduct. They labor under the disadvantage that they can't see in here, and in fact we can't see *out* first rate. But I never knew single redskins to pick a fuss with several white men, and I guess we shall find more concerned in this."

Not only the quick movements of a horse were heard, almost below them. Theodore sprung to his feet, but was held back by Green Jacket.

"Don't go out there in sight, unless you want to get shot!" he exclaimed.

The waiting might have been too late, had not some greater providence intervened. Even as the scout was paying the cost of his more impulsive companion, there came a snap and flash, quite distinct, from the very tree which had once before concealed a marksman, and another gun was discharged. But the unreliable weapon had been wet, and had

fire, so that the aim of the sharp-shooter was lost, and the bullet went wide of its mark.

"Hush!" whispered Green Jacket, "do not move now, but have your gun ready, and pistols, likewise. They are coming up the rocks!"

Yes, the movements of stealthy climbers could now be heard, and the two defenders put themselves in position to meet the foe—how numerous they had no means of knowing.

"Keep cool—cool!" said Green Jacket, in measured tones. "Take your rifle first, then pistols, and close with the knife. You can dew it."

Whether he could or not, the moment of trial was at hand, for just as his companion ceased speaking, three Indians, followed by two white men, appeared, and with a loud whoop, infernal enough in tones to frighten any person not accustomed to such shrieks, they rushed into the arena.

But they were very promptly met. The stern lantern was not dismayed by the shout, and before its fearful din had ceased, his rifle had given its note of warning. It was fired with a deadly purpose, and two fell before it—one of the Indians and a white man. The remaining two savages fired their guns, but Green Jacket was not injured, and without waiting to see whether any one else was struck, he threw himself upon the Indians.

He had no time to produce a fresh weapon, neither had the red-skins, who, quite astonished at the fury of the onslaught, were pressed back and over the brink of the rock, to the ground below, where they fell in a confused pile. One of them rose hastily, and fled from the spot, but the other remained, moaning and helpless.

But the fight was not finished. As the gunnaker pressed the body of the Indian over the brink, and before he could turn or retreat himself, he was grasped from behind, and the voice of Dan Duffey hissed in his ear:

"We'll settle now; die, you—"

He had already snatched two pistols at the scud, but both had missed fire, and, throwing them to the ground, he had drawn his knife, at the same moment grasping Green Jacket, and aiming a blow at his heart from the back.

But the blow was not given. The assailant, in fact, quickly

relaxed his hold, and turning at the moment, Green Jacket found that he owed his preservation to Louisa. She it was who had grasped Duffey's arm, staying the blow and causing him to turn upon her with murderous purpose at heart.

How quickly the strife ended now! One flash from scout's cradled gun, and Dan Duffey lay beside his green comrade and the dead Indian.

The first attention was given to Theodore, who had been shot through the shoulder, making a painful wound, and preventing him from taking any part in the rapid struggle which ensued. But it was not necessarily severe or dangerous, and Green Jacket merely remarked:

"Keep quiet while I look over the fellow, and see if there's anybody else wants lookin' after. That is nothing serious, only wants rest, and we're in a fair way to get the fellow. The bone is not broken much, if any, and I've surgined a good many worse cases."

Cautioning Louisa to stay near him, and take his place, so that she could give a prompt alarm in case of need, Green Jacket went first to Dan Duffey.

But he had no need to concern himself further about the outlaw. The skull was crushed in by the force of his blow, and death must have resulted instantly. Charles had been hit by Jerry Nobles, or Roswins, as we have known him. He was shot in the breast, and an ugly wound it was, from which the tide of life was trickling forth.

Green Jacket bent over it, and would have proceeded to examine as best he might the injury, but Nobles pressed him back.

"Go and leave me," he said, fiercely. "You've killed me, now don't come to trouble me while I am getting ready to die. May I die?" he added, with sudden energy.

"I see no help for you," said Green Jacket. "You may live a while, but we can not cure for you—poor fellow, you have!"

"Let Louisa come here. I want to speak with her again."

On hearing her name spoken, the mother came forward and knelt beside the man who had been so unmerciful to her.

"Louisa," he said, "I have never done the right thing by you, but I can not undo it now. Will you forgive me before I die?"

"Every thing, uncle. I would do any thing in my power if I could heal this cruel wound—"

"Never mind," the wounded man interposed, speaking faintly, "I was at fault. I was to blame, not the man who shot me. But I could do no less now. I ought to have lived a better life in years gone. Oh, it is hard to die like this, but I feel that I must go soon. And, oh, the great, awful future! What has it in store for me?"

Leaving them thus, Green Jacket hastened away, glancing at the dead Indian who lay close beside the two white men, and descending to where the other, with broken legs, was composing himself for the death he knew was not far distant.

Only two of the party had escaped, and they were far from the spot, in safety-seeking flight. As good fortune willed it, they had not taken away the horses before the fight, counting upon an easy victory, and now it was Green Jacket's pleasant task to lead them closer to the rendezvous, and secure them afresh, one of them having been set loose and driven about in order to draw the party above out into range of the attacking Indians.

Theodore came down at his companion's call, and the twain proceeded to a stream near by, finding very opportunely a spring where the water gushed forth in its purity, and here the wounded shoulder was dressed as well as possible under the circumstances.

Just at this time they were startled by a report, and hastened back, filled with most lively forebodings. But they were relieved to find that the Indian with the broken limbs had reloaded a gun which lay near him, and blown out his own brains, to end his sufferings.

Jerry Nobles was fast failing, and already he spoke with much difficulty, but when Theodore came up he called the young man to his side.

"Don't do as I have done," he said, very brokenly, "but be good—good to Louisa, for she is a good girl!"

We scarcely need say that the promise was heartily given.

In an hour more Jerry Nobles had finished his life record. We surely need not dwell upon the painful scene.

The body was carefully placed in the recess, that of Alfred Ross, the man whom he had injured and whose life he had

clouded, placed beside it, and in another corner the remains of the dissolute outlaw. The three dead Indians were gathered together at the foot of the rock, and then our party bade farewell to the spot. Their hearts bore much of sadness, but over it all beamed a great happiness that henceforth they were to be free from persecution.

Stopping but once for food, they reached Thompson's Pass before night came, and at a little distance on the other side made their bivouac.

Green Jacket shot a fawn, and its flesh, nicely cooked before the glowing fire, made such a repast as they scarcely remembered having tasted, for delicacy and flavor.

A night's sleep free from fear and forebodings refreshed and strengthened all parties wonderfully, and with the coming of light they set forward again.

Before noon of that day they reached a settlement where proper medical skill could be obtained for Theodore, and where the kind women soon collected a wardrobe for Louisa, to replace her dirt and blood-stained garments.

And when this had been done, and full arrangements for the future made, Green Jacket bade the now happy lovers a kind farewell, and despite their urgent appeals that he remain with them, departed for some unknown region. They never met him afterward. Nor could they ever learn the history of his life. Peculiar, brave, impulsive, he had won upon their gratitude, and in years subsequent other efforts were made to seek out his history, but all failed.

When Theodore had recovered from his wound sufficiently to travel, he was united to the maiden he had so strangely won, and together they sought the home in western Pennsylvania which awaited their coming. And to-day, if the reader chance that way, he will find them still happily living there, repeating sometimes to their children and the curious among their friends, as we have given it, the story of those days of trial, and of GREEN JACKET, THE GUNMAKER OF THE BORDER.

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